

A MAN'S RELIGION

WILLIAM FRASER McDOWELL



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A MAN'S RELIGION

LETTERS TO MEN

BY
WILLIAM FRASER McDOWELL

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FOREWORD

A PREFACE to a small volume of letters? The foreword to a letter is not important; the postscript is the thing. But if there must be a foreword, let it be this: In a certain Annual Conference a generous brother was reading the resolutions of appreciation and thanks. Concerning the presiding bishop he said: "The bishop's sermons, lectures, and addresses have been greatly benefited by the brethren." And the bishop liked it. He will like it now if these familiar letters are in any measure benefited by the dear brethren to whom in love they are addressed.

I have to thank the editor and publishers of the Adult Bible Class

FOREWORD

Monthly for the double privilege of writing the letters for that magazine and of reprinting them now in this small volume.

And I close the preface with the prayer most often on my lips as I have been writing to you, the words of that immortal man whose letters on religion are alive to this day: "Grace be with you all."

Ever yours,

William Fraser McDowell

LETTER I

THE MAN HIMSELF

DEAR BRETHREN: It is my privilege to write you a few letters on the important and interesting subject of "A Man's Religion." Indeed, I might well say *these* subjects, for men are important and interesting, religion is important and interesting, and taken together they are exceedingly so.

My very first feeling, as I begin, is one of keen sorrow for you and myself that we did not obtain such a series of letters, familiar and intimate in form, from our great philosopher and believer, guide, and teacher, the late Professor Borden P. Bowne. Far away from all his books, I am trying to recall what he did say, and to think what he would

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say to you about yourselves and about religion if he were writing these letters.

This first one is begun as we are making our slow way over the Mediterranean from the Church in America to the Church in Southern Asia. Over these waters Saint Paul sailed long ago, though not in such comfort as ours. Not far from where we ride to-day he wrote his immortal letters on religion when the Christian Church was young. Our errand on this journey and my desire in these brief letters are the same as his. We, like the great apostle, are going with the Christ and the cross to a people already "very religious." The people of Athens had an altar to the "unknown God." The people of India have so many gods they cannot count them with any accuracy.

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Within the next few days we shall be within hailing distance of Athens and Corinth and Crete; of the Holy Land and Sinai. We shall actually touch Egypt with its history and its mystery. We shall be forced to think of lawgiver, prophets, apostles, and the early life of our Lord. We shall read again those parts of the Old and the New Testaments most clearly related to these regions; and all the while we shall be going steadily forward, in the interest of men and religion, to Asia with its uncounted temples and gods. Everywhere around the world we shall be in touch with religious history, practices, beliefs, institutions, and life. We shall see many forms of faith and practice—some good, some bad, some unspeakable, but all full of meaning. We shall see many peoples, and people of all

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classes and conditions, and return at last, when the summer is young again, to our own land and our own people. Is there a word that may be said to the men at home and abroad which shall in some measure define and interpret men to themselves as religious, and religion to them as men? Is there any unity between countries as well as centuries? Is there a common word on religion that may be said to men everywhere? I devoutly pray that the Holy Spirit may guide me as I write these familiar letters to you in the name of the Man of Galilee.

Perhaps my very first word should be about you yourselves as men, or about ourselves as men. We have been written about and talked about for many centuries. Sometimes this has been done in the language of theology, sometimes in the language

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of science and philosophy, sometimes in the language of poetry, sometimes in eulogy like that of the psalmist or that of the dramatist, sometimes in the language of denunciation and despair. It has not always been easy for a plain man to recognize himself under these forms of thought and speech, though all of them may be partly, even largely, true. For a man does not ordinarily think of himself as a theological, a philosophical, or a poetical being. He does not, as a rule, in his common practice use these terms, however true they are. He thinks of himself in terms of the shop, the street, the office, the farm, the home—the terms of what is called daily life. The normal man, to whom I am writing, does not deny the language of theology or philosophy or poetry. He only wants it

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translated into the terms of common life. He likes to hear, as he likes to strike, the personal note. Certain men appeal to him because they seem such real men. He knows himself as a personal being and looks upon religion as a personal matter. He is not so sure of either theology or science or philosophy.

Much more than you ordinarily think, however, these things do affect you and are interwoven with your thoughts about yourselves. They are really very practical matters, theology and philosophy are. Most men are both theologians and philosophers, and many have a dash of the poet in them. And I am exceedingly glad to be writing these letters at a time when the personal, human note is so dominant in theology and philosophy. Patrick Geddes once said, rather sharply, "There are

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two kinds of theologians: one the kind that studies and criticizes other theologians, the other the theologian that has a religious experience." The prevailing note in theology to-day is the divine-human note, the personal note. The only man who now gets a hearing in theology is the one who tries to answer in terms of human life the questions of human life. The theologian must answer for religion the questions of the common man, but he must do it in the terms of life, the life of to-day and to-morrow.

Now, in order to obtain a starting point, I have asked a devout, intelligent, thoughtful modern man to give me his thought of himself with this large subject in view. This is substantially what he said, after thinking it all over carefully:

"I am a person of affections,

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opinions, beliefs, tempers, disposition, activities, relations, and hopes. I do not always know what is right, and I do not always do what is right. I have ideals far beyond my achievements either in character or conduct. I have in my past and in my present certain moral imperfections amounting to actual wrong. I do not seem able to get rid either of the disposition to do wrong or the results of doing wrong after it has been done. At the same time I have also a love for the right and a desire to do it, but I do not always seem able to do what I know to be right. I have my own opinions about a lot of things, and am in darkness and mystery about a lot more. I have as much temper, or as many tempers, some good, some bad, as any one man ought to carry around with him. I am blessed or other-

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wise by a rather abundant disposition, which is, like the taste of a certain man, 'some of it good.' I am not naturally a skeptic. I prefer to believe rather than to doubt. I used to think it did not matter much what a man believed, but only how he lived. I have found out that a right belief mightily helps to a right life, and I have also found out that right life makes faith in right easier and surer. I am intensely interested in and grateful for everything that helps me to be a better man. A large part of my life is taken up with making a living for myself and my family—chiefly for my family. All this seems to me a part of my real life, and I must have a religion that takes my occupation into account. Otherwise it is of small value to me. I have a lot of activities—

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political, social, and philanthropic—that are not a part of my regular occupation, but are a very large part of my real life. Religion must be in them also, it seems to me. I am a man of deep affection and strong friendships. My daily life is gladly bound up with my family and with my friends. Life does not seem to offer anything better than these relations. I do not love all men equally well. I find it hard, almost impossible, to love some men at all, but I do not find it hard to wish all men well and to do what I can for their good. I belong to the Church and believe in it.

“My theology, what I have, is very simple, my love for God very sincere. Many questions do not interest me, though I have great patience with men disturbed by

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doubts. I pray, though prayer is a mystery, because, somehow, prayer seems to bring me good. It seems more reasonable and much more profitable to pray than not to. I read my Bible, though it does not all seem equally interesting or valuable to me, because, somehow, that helps me in my daily life. If I knew a better book, one that did me more good, I should use it. I feel good when I do good or am good, and I 'catch it' inside of me when I do wrong. I would like to be one of Jesus Christ's true and steadfast friends. He deserves the best any man can give him, and his friendship would be good for me. I think it would be a good world if Jesus Christ and his principles were everywhere dominant.

"I am immensely interested in the present world, the life that

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now is. It seems good to me to be alive, with such activities, such personal possibilities, and such relations as life offers. I have lost a lot of friends and loved ones by death. I hope to find them again when death comes to me. They live still in my love. I cannot believe that they have ceased to live except in my love. So, though I cannot see nor prove, I hold fast with Jesus Christ to another life. There ought to be a place somewhere for a man to be perfectly free from sin, from trouble, and from death: a place where relations are perfect and faith is unclouded. All this makes up my life as a man. It does not seem very profound. It seems really very ordinary to me, but life itself perhaps is ordinary. Anyhow, these statements in themselves and their implications tell you pretty clearly

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what at least one man is and desires. And I find men generally very much like myself."

So he spoke for himself, and I doubt not for many others. He said, as anyone can see, that he was a person of faults and virtues, of good and evil, of high ideals and common practices, of activities, opinions, beliefs, relations, and hopes. That is about what a man is, about what you are. In thinking of a man's religion it is just about this kind of a man that we must think. The proportions of these elements in different men vary greatly. Not every man could give such a good account of himself, but in differing proportions these are the things belonging to a man. The language of eulogy is as out of place as the language of denunciation. This tells the story of need and of promise, of necessity

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and of possibility. Religion must be for man as he was, and is, and ought to be.

And that makes religion seem worth while. Somehow as this strong, wholesome, natural man talked of his life, his sins, his beliefs, his activities, his relations, his affections, his hopes for a better future, both the man himself and the religion for him took on a kind of glory. One can easily understand God's own interest in a man if this is what a man is like. One can easily understand how all the love and activities of God himself would break out of any sky into any world where such a being as this man dwells. We are still sailing through these Eastern waters. Just yonder, some men like this—men of life, of love, of hate, of wrong, of right, of families, of trade, of friendships,

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of hopes, men who were just men—were met once by Another. No wonder the whole country where he came to them is called the Holy Land to this day, for in that land Jesus Christ came to men as they were, men bearing names familiar to us, men engaged as men still are, there and elsewhere. He came to them in their sins, in their opinions, in their tempers, in their beliefs and doubts, in their activities and their friendships, in their hopes for a better world here and hereafter.

He brought his life among them, and the life was their light. He, full of grace and truth, came to them, and a lot of those strong, natural men, receiving him, became sons of God themselves. They got rid of their wrong lives and bad tendencies and evil tempers. They became new men without becoming

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old men. Their faith, their activities, their relations, their hopes were all transformed by their contact with him. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. Definitions are not necessary. Perhaps they are impossible. But a man is the being for whom and to whom Jesus Christ came. And the religion of Jesus Christ is for the man of Jesus Christ.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER II

RELIGION

DEAR BRETHREN: You will remember that in the first letter on this subject I quoted at some length a man's statement about himself. He seemed to speak for men generally. Many men recognized themselves in the portrait this one man drew. I was so interested in what he said that I asked him to tell me what he thought of religion, and he answered about as follows:

"I tried for a good many years to find and then to frame a definition of religion. It seemed to me that I could not understand the thing unless I had and could repeat a definition of it. I now think that this desire for an exact and convenient phrase was not based upon wisdom,

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that in all such personal matters as religion, definitions must be inadequate and unsatisfactory. The richest and deepest aspects of life cannot be put into a sentence. The classic and traditional definitions of religion seem to me especially partial and outworn, the echoes of a day when the whole stress of religion was laid upon part of it. Take this one for example: 'Religion is the relation between God and man, or between the worshiper and the object of his worship.' That surely is based upon the idea of worship as the chief feature of religion. Now, worship seems to me a very real and essential part of religion, but as a man I have so many other features in my life that this one idea, however large, will not cover them all.

"Or take this one: 'Religion is the life of God in the soul of man.'

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That seems open to the same objection. It does not cover all that belongs to me as a man. Of course, it is easy to quote certain familiar verses from the Bible, as though they covered the whole case and were meant so to do, but as I grow older and my life grows fuller and richer I do not find that any one passage, however true, fully states my experience. I used to repeat, as though they were final, the words of Micah 6. 8: 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?' I now think that the Lord requires much besides that. Then I used with much satisfaction the words of Saint James about pure religion: 'Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is

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this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.'

"As the years have gone all these words have meant more and more to me as a religious man, but less and less as definitions of religion. And I do not think this is because life is growing vague, but because it is growing rich. I would not like to attempt now to put into a sentence the words of eternal life.

"And this corresponds with my experience in other things. I was a young man when the Civil War came. I defined patriotism and loyalty then in a very definite and brief fashion. They meant saving the Union by going to the front. They still mean the life of the Union, only the whole meaning has enlarged so that my old patriotism seems very meager, though it was

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very real and true. I would once have defined love with a single feature and one person almost exclusively in view. The years have brought to us children and grandchildren, new relation to our own parents and to friends. Sorrow and bereavement have broken into love, and now love defies definition, not because it has grown thin, but because it has become rich. So with this matter of religion. Once I think I could have said in a sentence what it was. It meant then right beliefs. Now it means all that and a thousand things besides.

"I read a sentence the other day which seemed very suggestive to me: 'We must enlarge our definitions if we are to keep them.' I judge that this enlargement of idea comes with the enlargement of religious life. Religion becomes a bigger and

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better thing as a man becomes a bigger and a better man. Somehow the personal element looms ever larger and religion expands with growing character.

"I am deeply interested in the fact that religion of some sort seems to be universal. I used to think that some men were religious and others wholly without religion; just as I used to think that heathenism was equivalent to irreligion. I do not know how the human race got this universal tendency, but it certainly has it. I have read a lot of books about it, some of them enlightening and some not. I am a plain man, not a philosopher or a historian, and I am grateful for all the real work of the philosophers and historians, because religion seems to me the most important interest of life, and I want all the light I can get upon

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it. But, after all, as I look at it, the real business is not explaining the philosophy or accounting for the origin of religion in the race. It is not even making men religious. It is to give men with a wrong religion a right one, men with wrong beliefs, wrong practices, wrong relations, wrong activities, wrong lives, wrong ideals, wrong worship, right beliefs, right practices, right relations, right activities, right lives, right ideals, and right worship. Some religions seem better than others and some men better than others. Each of the great religions of the world seems to have some good in it, and this makes me glad. And I have never personally known a man without some good quality or qualities. And I am glad of that, for this gives a point of contact for true religion. I have for many years been studying

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the question of a man's religion in the lives of religious men in the biographies of the most eminent saints in history. Some men greatly commend themselves and their religion by one or more admirable features. I admire the teaching of some more than I do their personal character. I admire some of the teaching of some, but balk at the rest. I find certain practices of some very good and wholesome, and I rejoice in every piece of excellence I find anywhere. One day, some years ago, a friend said to me, 'Did you ever study Jesus as a religious man, not to discover the system he established, but to ascertain the religion of his own life?' I never had, but for years I have been doing it. I cannot begin to tell you what it has meant to me to study Jesus and his life in this way. It brings him

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into life in a positively new sense to live with him in the religion he practiced, the faith he held, the activities of his personal life, the relations he sustained as a religious man, relations to God and relations to men, relations to life itself. Somehow the religion he founded grips me more strongly as I see how it was also the religion he practiced. The things he believed seem worth believing. His creed, though never formally stated in the terms of a creed, embraces the best body of beliefs I have ever found. His practices constitute the best example I have found for my own life. He seemed to know how to live so as to keep his own life free from evil and full of grace and truth; and his relations with men, women, and children seem ideal. His activities in the world are such activities as the world of our day needs quite

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as much as did the world of his day. His habits of prayer and worship are habits worthy of becoming universal. You see what I mean: I interpret religion in the light of Jesus's life as a religious person, in the light of the religion he practiced. His character, his relation to God, his attitude to truth, his faith, his activities, his habits, his relations to others are all that logic or life or love require. I could not easily give a definition of religion, but I can point to Jesus as a religious Person and in him the term becomes plain. He is the best definition of religion that I have ever seen, and I do not seek any further for a satisfactory definition. If anybody asks me how I define religion, I answer that a definition can be found in Jesus Christ. And I do not sing any more, as I used to, 'The old-time religion is good enough

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for me.' Nor do I say that of even my mother's religion. The only religion that seems good enough to sing about or to practice, to live by or to die by, is the religion of Jesus Christ. I am always afraid of stopping somewhere short of that perfect thing. Studying Jesus Christ in this light has been vastly more fruitful to me than raising the question, 'What would Jesus do?' Anyhow, it has given me a new idea of religion. Christianity does not seem so much like a system as it did, and it does seem a lot more personal. I think of the religion of Jesus Christ now, not chiefly as something received from him, but, rather, as a most precious thing shared with him. It brings both him and his religion a great deal closer to my life to think of them in this way.

"Perhaps this is as good a place

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as any to speak of some fundamental tests which it seems to me any religion must meet. If a religion is to claim a whole man's whole life, it must meet certain fundamental requirements. They are not abstract nor impersonal conditions. I would rather say they are very vital, if that word did not seem somewhat overworked. But as it lies in my mind, or rather as it seems to me in the whole of me, any religion that is good for a man must be mentally straight and right. What is that word about loving God with all your mind? Well, it seems to me that if we are to love him with our minds, he must be the kind of God who can be loved without violating or sacrificing or crucifying a man's thinking powers. O, I do not insist that there shall be no mysteries or perplexities in religion, but I do

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insist that there must not be any rank and gross absurdities and contradictions in it. Faith must not be equivalent to folly, nor must it mean believing the things a man knows are not true. A religious man need not be a great or profound thinker, but his religion must not destroy, but must, rather, save his fundamental mental processes and powers. Even a revelation must be rational and not irrational. Here again the life of Jesus is exceedingly luminous. He did not set aside his mind nor destroy it in order to be devout and believing. I do not raise here the question of freedom to think, but only the question of straight thinking.

“So, also, it seems to me a religion ought to be good for a man’s morals and satisfy his conscience. Some of the so-called religious

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teachings, and much of the religious practice of the world, have been pretty bad morally. An awakened and enlightened conscience has some rights. Even in the name of religion a man must not be commanded or even permitted to do wrong. Who was it that said that 'life is three fourths conduct'? Matthew Arnold, I think. Well, whatever part of it is conduct must be right conduct, and religion must go all the time that way. This seems utterly commonplace, and I would not be saying it if there had not arisen in recent years, and had not existed for many years, more than one religion intellectually absurd and morally wrong. If religion goes astray with reference to true conscience and normal brains, it will not do for men.

"And it must have regard for a

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man's heart. Some of the gods, both of theology and mythology, have been altogether unlovely and unlovable. Commandments to love a god are of no use if the god is a tyrant or a monster. Such a god can just issue all the commandments he pleases and men will simply laugh at him, despise him, and hate him, as they ought. Love is about the best thing in the world and belongs in a man's religion. It is not easy to love a list of attributes nor an impersonal deity. But one is never surprised at Jesus Christ's love for God. He knew God as a lovely and lovable Person. He did not have to stultify his intellect, nor violate his conscience, nor suppress his affections because of his God. It seems to me that one of the real tasks of religious teachers is to show to men how lovable the God of Jesus Christ

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is. As a religious man I must be on friendly terms with my God and my brethren. I cannot make friends with certain kinds of people very easily, and with certain kinds of gods it is wholly impossible.

"Now this, and much more, is about what I think about religion. Everything is embraced in this."

So spoke my wise and thoughtful friend. Whether I can get him to speak any further I cannot say, but he certainly has indicated the way we must go in our further correspondence. It will be worth our while to master the religion which Jesus Christ practiced. Nothing else at present looks as good as this. He is certainly the best Man who has ever lived. His religion looks like the best religion for a man. Anyhow, I think it will appear so as we go on.

Ever yours, W. F. M.

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LETTER III

A MAN'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

DEAR BRETHREN: The time was when this would have been the chief subject of such letters as these. If I had been writing to you in the creed-making ages, the supreme emphasis would have been on this phase of religion. And our discussion would have been regarded as wholly incomplete if it failed to lay down a fairly full and comprehensive system of beliefs. It has been rather customary to identify beliefs with creeds, faith with dogma, and religion with theology. Much of the modern reaction against creeds, dogmas, and theology is due to this confusion.

Now, we are proceeding in our correspondence on the theory that

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religion is a personal matter. In thinking of ourselves as men, you remember, we decided that we are persons of beliefs, opinions, affections, tempers, dispositions, activities, worship, relations, ideals, and hopes. And we are anxious to find a way of life as thus constituted, a way by which life can be developed and maintained with ever enlarging power, growing beauty, and increasing perfection. Our search is never for a creed or a program, but always for a way of life, and we test creeds and programs by their relation to this larger and better thing. We desire right beliefs as a way to right lives. We would like to find the truth, not because we are philosophers or scientists, but because we are men. We have vastly more than an academic interest in truth. And, by the same token, we have much

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more than a theologian's interest in religious beliefs, or creeds, or faith. These are, with us, not matters of speculation, but of personal life or death. If a theologian goes wrong in making up his system, he is a heretic and may be tried for heresy; but if a man goes wrong in his faith, he misses the way of life, and missing that is absolutely fatal to a man.

It is my good fortune to meet every year many young men in our colleges and universities. They, perhaps more than most people, are disturbed in their faith by the conditions of modern life and thought. Many of them have found serious difficulty in adjusting their early creeds to their new learning. It is a time when the faith of many men, in college and out, is unsettled. You meet many men who are frightened,

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or are uncertain, or are noisily dogmatic on one side or the other, or are waiting to see what happens, or are just holding fast with a grim determination not to let go, or have found the center of peace in their believing and are living their lives in strength, sanity, and sweetness, knowing Whom they have believed and that he is able to keep the lives they have committed to him. Some time ago one of the best of these disturbed men came to me with a statement of his perplexities. It seemed to him that everything was torn up by the roots. He was almost hopelessly bewildered. He was not an unbeliever, but his house had fallen down about him and he was in despair. He said frankly: "It looks to me as if everything I have ever believed has either been totally changed or wholly destroyed, and I

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cannot get my bearings. And I simply cannot live this way. I must either throw it all over and get along the best I can, or I must get a new hold so as to live. Now, do not tell me to patch up my old faith, or to save what few beliefs I can out of the wreck. If that is all there is to it, there is not enough in it for a man like me. I do not ask for many beliefs. I am quite willing to let a few of my old ones go. They never meant much, anyhow. But if I am to have any faith at all, it must be strong and solid, not a patchwork or a makeshift, for I must rest my whole weight on it. I can stand some mysteries, but I cannot compromise in this matter. Can you help me?"

What can be said to a man in this condition? Something must be said. He cannot be ignored; he must not

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be denounced as an infidel; he cannot be treated as a child. Any religious teacher ought to rejoice in the chance to help such a man as this. Maybe I am writing to a lot of men in just about this state of mind. What then shall I say to you?

First: You are not the first man in history to experience a commotion in your faith. All the ages have been ages of transition, and in such ages exactly such experiences as yours are always occurring. Men have always been learning something new and throwing off something old. It was true in the time of Jesus and Paul, the times of Athanasius, Luther, and Wesley. Indeed, every one of these great teachers created or discovered and dealt with conditions like those that exist to-day. Do not regard yourself, therefore, as

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an outcast or an infidel because of this commotion. It takes something else to make outcasts and infidels, and I trust you are free from that something else.

Second: Do not be disturbed over the necessity of letting go some of the opinions you have held, though you may have thought of them as parts of your saving faith. It is common experience that as the years pass we add to what is really essential certain things which are nonessential, though sometimes important, and it gives us a wrench to let them go again. It looks like the complete destruction of faith. But not every belief is essential to salvation. A house is not destroyed by the breaking of a window; it may be improved.

You remember the story of the jailer there in the book of Acts. He

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asked a simple, searching question that cut straight through to the very center. It is a man's question, asked like a man would ask such a question when he must know the truth. "What must I do to be saved?" And you remember the answer he received. It is a man's answer too, given by one of the truest men who have ever had anything to say about religion: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I judge that nobody would find fault with that answer to this day. It is a true reply for all time.

As the centuries go on many things will be added to that vital statement. Some of those things will be perfectly true, some of them doubtful; and some of the things held true in one age will be dropped by a succeeding age. It would be

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an interesting study, if we had time to make it, to see what beliefs have persisted through the centuries, and what others have arisen, "had their day, and ceased to be." I think we should find that the fittest have really survived, that "what is excellent, as God lives, is permanent." In spite of all variations, perversions, falsehoods, and recessions, the things that are fundamental have been fairly steady.

Third: Remember that believing a thing does not make it true, and denying it does not make it untrue. Many things which men regard as questions of religious faith are not questions of faith at all. They are questions of fact altogether. Faith is not blind, but keen-eyed and open-eyed. It is not opposed to reason or vision or fact. It does not thrive on anything except truth.

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Believing a thing or a statement does not make it true. Our faith does not create facts. But believing a truth makes a man, as believing a lie unmakes him. His faith does not affect the fact or the falsehood, but it mightily affects him. You will not be made a better man or a worse man by holding certain opinions. Nor will your believing certain things in any degree affect the facts. But you will be made a better or worse man by your attitude to truth. Do not for one moment fall into either of two errors: one that you must believe everything in order to be saved, the other that it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. This whole question is one of life. Believing falsehoods creates false lives. "Indian pantheism will inevitably make India." True

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Christianity as surely makes Christendom.

Our beliefs are not all equally important or fruitful in our own lives, and the life it produces is the final test of the creed. "Bring things to the test of life," said Saint Paul, and "hold fast what is good for life." "If the ghost that is in you leaves your hand the hand of a juggler, your heart the heart of a cheat, your tongue the tongue of a liar, be assured it is no Holy Ghost."

You must remember also that in the realm of religion we come to our beliefs by the way of life, and our beliefs have value and reality only in life. It is a long way from the preliminary to the final experience. Many of the great things in religion have no meaning apart from our experience of them. The way of

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life is the way of truth. Experience, including obedience, is the "organ of spiritual knowledge." Life is the organ of more knowledge than logic alone can be. Only as a man goes on do certain things clear up. I learned the Beatitudes in my youth, as doubtless you did. And because Jesus spoke them I believed them, but my belief of some of them was formal and not vital. There is one which says, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." I did not deny that; I believed it in a way, chiefly because he said it. At some stages of life it is a blind, hard saying. But as I came into the lives of men and women I saw them finding this wonderful sentence true, true in the only experiences which can interpret its meaning and make it real. These are personal letters I am writing, the letters of one man

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to other men. Shall I tell you, then, in the intimacy of this correspondence, that I myself have found that strange beatitude true?

For you must remember also that a set of beliefs grows with the growth of a man in life's experiences. They cannot be made to order, nor once for all. A form of words can be agreed upon, but a living man's real beliefs are not worked out in a council. They are developed and shaped in the life of the man himself. A faith created in an academic way is usually held in the same academic fashion. Its hold upon men is slight; men's hold upon it is feeble and slack. We may enter a church by a formal assent to a creed which is perfectly true, but we do not enter into the meaning of the creed in any formal way. The fatal weakness of many creeds is

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that they are created by speculation and held apart from the burning necessities, the fierce struggles, the hot trials of daily life. And many a man's faith breaks down in a crisis because his faith is formal and not vital. The words do not seem to mean anything in the crisis. A living faith has to be achieved, and it is not done either to order or all at once. You may share the same faith with many other men, but it is not really yours simply because it is theirs.

Every Sunday I see men standing up in church and hear them saying, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." And they do. They are not hypocrites. But those wonderful words do not mean the same thing to all those men on any day, and they do not mean the same thing to any man all the time.

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This sentence is a form, both of sound words and sound doctrine, but it may be only that unless it is worked into experience. It is not a true belief, a saving faith, until a man believes it with the heavens falling about him; believes it when hope is deferred, the head is faint and the heart sick; believes it through a lot of evil report, believes it when life is hard and bitter and cruel; believes it even when God himself seems to have forsaken a man. In other words, a formal faith can become a real faith only in the realm of life and experience. It goes to the very depths of our lives. "It is not the formula we repeat, but the principles by which we live."

We do not live long nor well on negatives. I met a man not long since whose whole set of beliefs

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seemed to be made up of the things he did not believe. I asked him what he thought about God, and he began to tell me what he did not think. I asked him what he believed about duty, and he began at once to enumerate the things he did not believe. It all seemed meager and pitiful for a real man. A man may have a very small stock of positive beliefs and be a very rich man, nevertheless. No list of negatives, however long and complete, can ever take the place of our affirmations.

Remember also that the way into beliefs is the way of practice, and that our beliefs, if correct, constantly become larger as we use them. Many a man's creed represents "the truth he has on deposit," not in circulation. And on deposit it does not grow very fast, if at all.

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In my next letter I want to write about the beliefs of Jesus—not the creed he taught, but the creed he lived by and shaped his life by. How did he get into the beliefs he held, and what use did he make of them? Meantime may I ask you what are your real beliefs as a religious man? How did you get those beliefs, and what do they mean to you? Do they mean any more than they did ten years ago? And are you in the moral attitude toward life and truth that would naturally lead to truth? Good creeds help to make good lives, but good lives lead also to sound and right beliefs.

I think your formal creeds are likely to be shorter than in the older days. I would say simpler also if the word "simple" had not been much abused. Do you remember MacLaren's creed as pub-

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lished a few years ago? Here it is again:

"I believe in the Fatherhood of God; I believe in the words of Jesus; I believe in the clean heart; I believe in the service of love; I believe in the unworldly life; I believe in the Beatitudes; I promise to trust God and follow Christ; to forgive my enemies and to seek after the righteousness of God."

I can still recall with a certain thrill the impression this made when it appeared in the "Mind of the Master." Many men, weary of the longer, more elaborate formulas of faith, seized these strong, direct words eagerly and gratefully. It is a noble statement, noble now as when it first appeared. It is something fine for a man to have made such an utterance for himself and for others. But the life can pass

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out of even such sentences as these and they can become as formal as any creed in existence.

But I ask you men to look them over again and see what response your life makes to them. There must be something wrong with it if it does not leap up to greet such sentiments with joy.

I began these letters on the Mediterranean Sea. We have girdled the globe within the year, and I am writing to-night in my own library by Lake Michigan. All the way around the world I have repeated the creed called the Apostles' Creed. It grew richer and richer through the months and the new conditions. In the face of gods uncounted it was good to believe in God the Father Almighty. In the face of Asia's degradation and despair it was good to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord,

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and in the Holy Ghost. At Bombay and Singapore and Foochow we heard of the death of dear friends. Then we repeated again with a new joy, "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Longer creeds are true. I do not doubt or deny them. But I have found this one good. Have you?

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER IV

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS CHRIST

DEAR BRETHREN: You remember that the man who was quoted so freely and fully in my first two letters spoke of the way he had come to think of the religion practiced by the best men in history and notably of the religion of Jesus. He meant, as you recall, not the religion which Jesus established, but the religion he professed, the religion by which he lived. The character of such a person as Jesus tremendously reënforces his beliefs. He was sane and wise, wholly free from all foolishness; he was free from even the suspicion of evil; his life was all that a life should be when judged by the highest standards. The beliefs of such a Person

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are worth knowing. And it will be worth while, surely, for us men to learn what his living beliefs were, how he came to them, how he kept them, the use he made of them, their meaning in his life, and their value to him and to us.

Of course, this is wholly personal. We are not now seeking to find or to formulate a set of beliefs for a denomination or an organization within a denomination. We are simply trying to see what was the faith of this one Person, in order to get some light upon the question of our own personal beliefs. We are not even seeking correct doctrinal opinions, or a new or old theology. All that would be interesting and might be profitable, but just now we are trying to see the working theory, the real, living beliefs of the one best Person in history. It would

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be a shame that such a man as Jesus should live and believe and we men not discover the personal basis of his life. We must care about that if we care for the very best that there is.

Now, suppose, in addition to reading this letter of mine, you reread any or all of the four Gospels, thinking, as you do, of Jesus and his beliefs, the beliefs in which and by which he lived in strength and holiness and usefulness. Mark is the shortest Gospel; read it through at a sitting. You will be struck first of all perhaps to see what a believer Jesus was. He had just as good a right, and just as much occasion, to be a skeptic as anybody ever had, but the note of doubt does not break out at all, though the cry of agony does come once.

He carried with him an atmos-

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phere of belief, just as some men carry the opposite atmosphere. Thomas Arnold was said to awaken every morning with the feeling that everything was an open question. I think that does Arnold an injustice, but it represents a well-known and widespread mental habit.

Goldwin Smith says of Jowett: "There was no clinch in his mind. He would have doubted and kept other people doubting forever. Whatever was advanced, his first impulse was always to deny."

This was not the mental habit or attitude of Jesus. Right or wrong, he believed, and believed, as Phillips Brooks would say, "with his whole system." He did not throw the strength of his life into the negative phases of life. He believed his beliefs. The weight of his life went into the positive and con-

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structive forms of thought and activity. He was not chiefly an investigator and critic, though there was plenty of occasion for such work in his day. Lucy Larcom said Phillips Brooks was the "most living man" she ever saw. That was the way John felt about Jesus. He said it in the words, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." There is something more than contagious in the positiveness of Jesus's attitude both to truth and activity.

He never formulated a specific creed either for himself or for others, but he worked his way through an exceedingly suggestive and luminous set of working principles, as anyone can see. His creed constituted his working principles. And it comes out not all at once in a series of statements, but part at a time as

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his life goes on and his experience develops. It is easier to feel what he believed than to state it. Indeed, trying to frame and phrase the beliefs of Jesus into a formal creed seems rather an impertinence.

Somehow, the best way to get into the beliefs of Jesus is to get in by Jesus's way, the way of experience, of practice; by believing the things he believed and doing the things he did. We discover in this way the perfectly wonderful reaction and interaction of his belief upon his life and life upon his belief. We discover very soon that he believed in goodness. Do you? He believed in it as a personal and a world matter. Do you? Some men believe they can themselves be good, but they doubt the possibility of a good world. So they give themselves to being good and let the

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world take care of itself. Jesus had a different faith. I am not concerned now to define or to analyze the words so often on his lips, "kingdom of heaven." It is enough for our purpose to say that for this world and all worlds he was committed to a kingdom of genuine goodness. And he did not regard it as a vain dream, an impossible phantasm. He believed in goodness both as a personal and universal thing, and just walked straight ahead in that faith to the end. His world was morally like ours, with the same tangles and perplexities, but with Jesus there was the clear note of an unquestioning belief in goodness.

Contrasted with Solomon's or Plato's or Goethe's view of life, the view of Jesus is like sunshine as compared with fog. A certain an-

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cient moralist is said to have advised his students to walk carefully "the narrow path *between* right and wrong." It is rather a crowded path to-day, but Jesus is not to be found walking in it.

I think we should clear up a good many of our current intellectual doubts and questions by strengthening our belief in just pure goodness.

I was reading a few days ago the story of a successful young salesman whose success was explained in these words: "He believed in the house he represented; he believed in the goods he had to sell; he kept himself worthy of his employers and his employment; he put enthusiasm and conscience and intelligence into his job and kept his accounts and his life ready for inspection at any minute." I belong to a merchant

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family and I liked that. And I say reverently that I thought at once of our Master. He would not be displeased with me for it. He was always trying to relate himself and his truth to us through just these common human experiences and occupations. Jesus believed in the house he represented. He knew the heavenly Father and believed in him. He never balanced between the probable and the improbable. God was his Father and the Father of all men, and God was good. And he told men so.

And he believed in what he had to offer men. He never wanted to exhibit his goods in a dim or uncertain light. He knew they were good. He had tried them himself. Knowledge of God, friendship with God, and Sonship to God were all good; all good for him. He knew it and

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wanted all men to know it. All this he believed would be good for other men. I do not mean that primarily he wanted men to believe a set of truths, even great and noble truths. It would be easy to say that he taught "the Fatherhood of God, the Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, the Friendhood of the Spirit, the Supremacy of Love, and the Transforming Power." All that would be true, but he never taught these truths as propositions. He did not bring a statement to men; he brought a fact and a relation. These were not the formal phrases of a creed. These were the facts upon which his life was based. And using these as working principles life did not look like vanity to Jesus. His truth, his beliefs worked out in conduct and activity. His truth did not go out simply as a word. It

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went out chiefly as a personal force.

So too he evidently believed in the kind of service that does good. He was not an academic reformer, nor a mere preacher of crusades. He believed in children and set himself to their care in the world. He believed in the redemption, not the destruction of men and women, and led a lot of them out of their old lives into a new. He believed in seizing all kinds of people at the point of their greatest interest and real power and tying them up to that kingdom of goodness to which he was giving his life.

He tried prayer in his own life and experience and found it good. Then he commended it to other men. He tried communion with God as a personal experience and found it good, and commended it to

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other men. He tried the life of service and found it good, and commended it to other men. He believed at the beginning in what he came to do. As he went on he continued to believe in it, and never had to reverse his life. His beliefs consisted in personal relations, vital truths, and a line of action. He tried them all out in his own experience. They seemed to him worth living by and worth dying for. And his beliefs steadily grew richer and deeper to him. He performed a humble duty, believing in his divine origin and his divine destiny. He resisted subtle temptation, believing in better things than bread, and in loyalty rather than compromise. He held a perfectly straight course, in kindness, mercy, love, and truth, just as any man of us may and should, "knowing

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whence he came and whither he went." And God was about his path because he walked in duty, fidelity, and loving trust. Eternity was in his life because even in time his life was in eternity and always full of the powers of the world to come.

He lived in a believing age, accepting some and rejecting others of the beliefs current about him. And ever the task has been to keep clear the beliefs of Jesus and to prevent a crust from forming about them. That is why I am asking you men to reread any one of the Gospels, or all of them, just to see in a fresh, living way what he did believe and how it showed itself. At the risk of being tiresome I repeat again that I am asking you to look, not at the beliefs he taught us to hold, but at those he held him-

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self, those he lived by and died for. Will you do it? I cannot doubt the effect upon your own beliefs if you will. I cannot doubt the effect upon any man who, in this sane and intelligent fashion, begins to "dream Christ's dream," to believe his beliefs, to take up his harp of life and strike its chords, to live, as he did, the heavenly life upon earth, the eternal life in time. This practice of Jesus is only one of a thousand possible practices, his way only one of a thousand possible ways. You can follow this practice and walk in this way or not, just as you choose. There is no way to force you into it. There is no disposition to do so. There is no better practice or way known to us men. History and biography show nothing superior. And I do not hesitate to say to you, as one man to other men, that if

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you will believe these beliefs, practice these practices, walk in this way of Jesus, men will take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus and have learned from him how to live. And I know of nothing better than this that life has to offer to men like us.

It seems a far cry from the Mediterranean Sea on which I wrote you my first letter. We were nearer then to what is known as the Holy Land than we are now. But really Jesus and his truth, his life, his beliefs, seem nearer to-day than on that other day. And I am wondering if we cannot unite with him to make this and every land a holy land. What do you say?

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER V

A MAN'S RELATIONS

DEAR BRETHREN: One of the older definitions of religion ran like this: "Religion is the relation between a worshiped being and a worshiper, or between God and man." This throws the whole stress of religion upon the one idea of relations. And there is so much truth in this idea that for many people it seems entirely adequate. For them the primary act of religion is expressed in the words, "Get right with God," and its fundamental test the question of losing or keeping their relations with God. On this theory worship of God is the essence of religion, and receiving blessing from him the benefit of it.

Now, you will remember a word

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in one of the earlier letters which said that "we must enlarge our definitions if we are to keep them." This definition, it seems to me, must be enlarged and vitalized and humanized. And our relations to God will not be narrowed but enriched by the process.

Personally, I think this as fascinating a topic as we shall have to discuss together. It takes the whole matter entirely out of the abstract and puts it into the concrete and personal in a way that makes one's blood run fast. I like the things that keep religion personal. The emphasis of religion and education should always be laid upon personality. In education teachers should regard themselves chiefly as teachers of persons rather than teachers of subjects. You remember how a wise, experienced man

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once said, "The master and the fellows are the best part of a college course." One of the most wholesome men I ever knew often said to his friends, "I would rather acquire a new friend than a new farm, and would rather form a new friendship than a new faith." Perhaps these are exaggerations; but if so, they are exaggerations of a real truth, for, after all, persons are the most important things in the world, and the question of personal relations the most significant question.

The Bible makes very much of men's personal relations with God and with one another. All the terms that can suggest and define these relations are used. The men who wrote that great Book never seemed to think that they could express all that God and men might be to one

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another in a single term, however large. We have a rather persistent tendency to the use of catch words. Limited phrases are easily quoted and, consequently, become very popular; or single phases of a profound truth appeal to us, and we exclude all the rest. I know certain men who have a distinct preference for one beatitude over the others, and who even like some of the commandments better than the others. It is neither a good principle nor a wholesome practice. In this matter of relations with God "all things are yours." We are not shut up to the use of a single term nor to a partial idea under any of the noble names for God and thoughts of our relations to him. We can easily recall, for instance, when certain eminent men were proclaiming the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God with all

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the zeal of a new discovery. And many of them were interpreting the truth of God's Fatherhood in a wholly narrow and meager way. They were in a natural reaction against certain older and less attractive conceptions of God. But a soft God is not much more attractive than a hard God. And men like you feel this to be so. Once, when we were going out of church after a soft sermon on the Fatherhood of God, I heard a keen, kind man say to his neighbor: "I hardly think God is as easy as that. That kind of a father would not do very well in bringing up a family of children." You see, no idea of God is a complete idea when standing alone. Life's relations and demands are rich and manifold. We and our friends, we and our children, must be many things to each other. God

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and ourselves must be many things to each other.

You remember the man who was quoted so freely in one or two earlier letters. Before writing this letter I thought it wise to ask him what he thought about this subject. He did not reply at once, but several days afterward he handed me a written statement, with the words: "This is the best I can do to-day. It is better than I could have done a year ago, but not as well as I shall be able to do a year from now." He meant, of course, that the relations between God and himself had not reached a fixed or final stage, but were living and growing. This is his statement: "I think of God in more than one way. I am obliged to use all the rich names the Bible gives him. Sometimes one of them seems best, sometimes another.

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They are not mutually exclusive. I think of him as my Creator, and it makes my life seem sacred to me to think that it came from him. I must not abuse or regard lightly what he has made. He has real and large rights in me because he is my Creator. The world I live in is his world, and I must live in it and use it as his. I think of him as my Lord and Ruler. He does not seem to me a tyrant or a despot. His relation seems to me something more, not something less, than a Father's relation. I am his child, but I am also a member of his kingdom. These things are not contradictory unless I get them out of balance. He is my Father and I am his son. I trust that I am a well-beloved son. All that lies in that relation belongs to me, and if he thinks of his children as I think of mine, all that lies

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in that relation belongs to him also. And I like the word that describes Abraham as the friend of God. I like to think of myself in that relation. Friendship is necessary to life, and I prize the friendship of God beyond all others. I have read that after Matthew Arnold's death one of his friends said, 'Poor Arnold, he will not like God.' And I was sorry for Arnold. I think a man who simply obeys, or trusts, or *religiously* loves God has missed something. I like him, and I like to be with him, and I like the things he likes.

"So, as you see, I use all the terms, and they all mean something to me. But they do not mean the same thing all the time. My children are always my children, and I am always their father, but that does not mean the same thing two days

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in succession. Sometimes I am anxious about them, sometimes unhappy over them, sometimes I am wholly glad and pleased in them. Sometimes I vex and displease them, and sometimes I please them. I am not always wise, and sometimes they think me unwise when I am not. But our relation is permanent, and love never ceases. Now, my heavenly Father is always my Father and I am always his son. And I do not doubt that sometimes he is anxious and unhappy about me. I give him concern, I know. Sometimes, most of the time, I hope he is 'glad of me.' He displeases me sometimes, because I like my way better than his at times. But I have learned that he is always wise. I know that he always loves me, and I am glad that he is firm and steady with me. He is the kind of a Father I ought to

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have, and I hope at last to be the kind of a son he ought to have. He had one Son once who was all right all the time. He deserves a lot more, and I want to be one of them.

“My children have changed relation to me since they were babies. They have become companions and friends and sharers of all my life interests. I remember reading once that Victor Hugo said that ‘heaven is the place where the children are always little and the parents are always young.’ That does not seem to have sense in it. My son is now forty, and I am sixty-five. I was a proud father when he was born, but not half as proud or pleased as now when I see him doing a big man’s work in the world. It was not half so fine to wheel him in a baby carriage in his weakness as it is to

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stand up beside him and feel his strength. Of course, he calls me 'Dad' and I call him 'Boy,' but there are two men of us now, and my life is richer because he is a man. We mean a lot more to one another than we did forty, or even twenty, years ago. I hope that is true as between God and myself.

"I tell my plans to my son and we work together. This confidence between us has grown through the years. I sometimes think this may have been what Jesus had in mind when he said, 'A servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth,' and that he meant something like the relation between my boy and me when he said, 'Henceforth I call you friends.' I like that term. My son and I spend much time together. We work at the same things. We

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care for the same people. We do not let our relation drift or suffer from neglect. I have seen too many friends drift apart in my time.

“So—I speak reverently—I spend as much time with my heavenly Father as possible. My son said a lovely thing about me to an old friend of mine. He said, ‘The more you are with my father, and the better you know him, the more you love him and want to be with him.’ Well, call it what you will, communion with God, fellowship with God, friendship with God, or knowing God, the more you are with him, and the better you know him, the more you love him and want to be with him. So I use all the good names to call him by, and our relation is very rich and varied. He touches my life at many points, and always does it good. I would not

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know what to do with myself or with my life if it were not for these relations with him. They get better and better, as such relations always should. And I keep saying of this relation, as of some other, 'The best is yet to be.'

"I think I ought to add that I love God with my mind much more than I used to. He always had my heart and its affection, but now he has the whole love of my whole being. Perhaps this was not quite what you wanted me to say, but it nearly tells what I think to-day. Next year I shall have a better story to tell."

Not much needs to be added to that statement. Still, there is a word, a practical word. These letters are not written as doctrinal studies, but as practical life studies. So I think the establishment and

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maintenance of right relations with God the next steps after any definition of the relations between man and him. There is a real truth in the familiar words, "Get right with God." Eliminate all the cant that grows around such a phrase and there is still a large meaning left. I have spoken of God as our Creator, our Lord and Master, our Father, and our Friend. But the law of relations is reciprocal. And all these terms put upon us pretty serious requirements. He is always a perfect Creator, a true Lord and Master, a wise and loving Father, and a good, firm Friend. But these reciprocal relations cannot exist if we men are not constantly answering back to him in a right response. These letters are really intended to be very practical. I do not hesitate, then, to ask whether, in all these

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particulars, you are in right relations with God. Do you, for example, know citizenship in his kingdom, sonship in his family, and friendship with him as an experience rather than as a doctrine? If there is anything wrong or imperfect in your relation, he is not to blame for it. The clouds that hide him are earth-born. Will you clear them away as far as you can? The way back to perfect relations is the way of Jesus Christ. Will you take it?

And will you cultivate these relations? Jowett wrote to Stanley: "I earnestly hope that the friendship which commenced between us many years ago may be a blessing to last us through life. I feel that if it is to be so, we must both go onward, otherwise the tear and wear of life, and the 'having traveled over each

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other's minds, and a thousand accidents will be sufficient to break it off."

Somehow, the relation gets pretty thin unless it has attention. Some men never get beyond the wonder of their introduction to other men or their first experience with God. And friendship does not survive when there is nothing in it except a perpetual going over of that first meeting. Our relation ought to be better than that, but in order to be better we must give attention to it. A neglected friendship with man or God comes to grief. A thin and shallow personality is incapable of the deepest things in personal relationships. Dr. King quotes from Phillips Brooks these words: "Surely there is no more beautiful sight to see in all this world—full as it is of beautiful adjustments and mutual

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ministrations—than the growth of two friends' natures who, as they grow old together, are always fathoming with newer needs deeper depths of each other's life, and opening richer veins of one another's helpfulness. And this best culture of personal friendship is taken up and made in its infinite completion the gospel method of the progressive saving of the soul by Christ."

In this light how rich certain familiar expressions become: "And Abraham was called the friend of God"; "Henceforth I call you no more servants but friends"; "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"; "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ."

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This is among the things religion offers to a man. It offers much besides this. But this is enough to make any man rich.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER VI

HIS HUMAN RELATIONS

DEAR BRETHREN: It seems almost strange that in the older definitions of religion the stress should have been so largely laid upon one side of it. Cardinal Newman's words are in line with almost universal usage: "By religion I mean the knowledge of God, of his will, and our duties toward him." Martineau put it thus: "By religion I mean the belief in and worship of Supreme Mind and Will directing the universe and holding moral relations with human life."

Now, it is not hard to see two things as one looks at those definitions: first, that they take no sufficient account of a man's human relations; and, second, that their

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sure tendency must be to make religion a thing of worship, ceremonial, ritual, and doctrine. If this theory be emphasized and developed, human relations become less and less sacred and religious rites grow from more to more. In point of fact, this is exactly the history of this one-sided idea and its development in experience. One need not go outside the familiar history of the Hebrews to see the universal trend or tendency of religion to become one-sided. And the reaction of the prophets in Judaism showed the tendency of every reaction. But things had reached such a pass that a reaction had to be violent in order to be effective. If a strong man stole a poor man's farm, or robbed a widow, or defrauded an orphan, or committed any other offense against his neighbor or his tribe, he believed

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that he could make it all right with God by elaborate ceremony of sacrifice, burning of beasts and incense, and performance of stately ritual in the temple. And it was not thought necessary that he should make it right with men. And the prophets broke out against this wicked idea with a wrath that seems to make all modern religious anger seem mild and gentle. The early words in Isaiah are so severe that if a modern preacher should use them concerning his congregation he would be told to "preach the simple gospel." They are interesting reading, however, this very year: "I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; I am weary of blood and incense and I hate your processions and tramping around the temple." "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide

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mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isa. 1. 15-17.)

Jesus liked what Hosea said: "I desire goodness and not sacrifice." So on the quotations might go. They all illustrate or emphasize the same thing, namely, that God is ever seeking obedience, righteousness, love, mercy, kindness, justice between men and reverence toward himself. He has ever been trying to put the force of religious worship behind religious work, the life generated by contact with him into conduct toward men. We need not use figures, but we can easily appre-

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ciate Arnold's statement that life is three fourths conduct.

I think no one can read the prophets or the Gospels without feeling that religion is vastly more than the relation between God and man, and that worship is not religion's full expression or its most significant act. The definition of religion tremendously needs enlargement so as to include these human relations and activities. It must take equal account of worship and work, of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, paying vows and paying debts, being pious and being kind. A keen living preacher once said, "God and one man might make any other religion, but it takes God and two men to make Christianity." That is clever and epigrammatic, but not quite true. It takes God and two

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men to make any real religion. In other words, religion is a thing of human relations as well as divine relations, and a man is not truly and wholly a religious man until he is religious in all his relations.

One of the easy shibboleths of religion is expressed in the familiar and wholesome words, "Get right with God," and this is often followed with the statement that if a man gets right with God, he will be right with men. But many men make an effort, resort to a process to get right with God, and leave the other to inference. Getting right with men by inference is very much easier than doing it in fact. Repentance toward God is not actually complete until there is also restitution toward man. It is lots easier to invite the Saviour home to dinner than to restore fourfold to those

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whom a man has wronged in trade or otherwise. The business of getting right with men is a real business and not an inference. It requires care and attention. Sometimes it requires pain and effort. But there is no other way to make a religious life moral than to bring into all relations the sanctity that we seek in our relations with God.

There has been a long and painful separation in both speech and thought between religion and morals. Religious speech has not infrequently spoken contemptuously of mere morals. The ethical life has been thought of as a thing apart or, again, as a matter of inference. And there have been many merry gibes each way, all of them wrong and all of them unhappy. The sanest teacher the world has known put the two relations together and for-

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ever repudiated that false and fatal distinction between religion and ethics in practical life.

A great modern writer has defined Christian ethics in these words: "Christian ethics is the science of living well with one another according to Christ." That sentence will bear analysis and elaboration. "Christian ethics is the science of living"—that makes it vital, a thing not simply of logic, but of life. It is "the science of living well"—that gives it dignity, and character, and nobility, and lifts it above all low levels to a high personal plane. One can easily understand the strength of this as an appeal to a man desiring to be strong and fine in personal character and conduct. It is "the science of living well with one another"—and that ties personal relations up with personal

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excellence and makes this science of noble living cover not only the man himself but the man among men, not only his character but his friendships and his enmities, the whole vast, complicated scheme of his human relationships. It is "the science of living well"—that is nobly—"with one another"—that is socially and humanly—"according to Christ"; and when you pronounce that word you lift the whole subject into the region where all false distinctions between ethics and religion vanish in the presence of his life which made no such distinctions. It was all religious and all moral with him and should be with us men. His relations with God and men, with the heavenly Father and the trying fisherman, were all of one piece. His obedience and his prayers, his philanthropy and his

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communion, all struck the same note. He knew "no life divided," and he never raised that foolish question about men being religious without being moral, just as he never discredited or despised "mere morality."

I am writing to poor purpose unless I am making clear to other men that the essence of religion covers a lot of vital matters as it covers all the relations, divine and human, which we sustain. I wish I could make clear also that there is danger here of a professional element. Some men are professionally religious and some are professionally human. One set becomes priests and the other philanthropists or social workers—all of a certain type. Some men are chiefly interested in the doctrinal, others in the liturgical, others in the social side of religion. Some men

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seem almost afraid to become interested in the social phases of religion lest they may become social reformers or specialists in the matter of relations between classes. I am not trying to promote any exclusive type of religion. I am thinking of religion, not as a technically social question involving some of the strained relations of the world, but as a broadly, genuinely human matter involving all human relations. I do not ask whether you are a philanthropist or a social reformer, but whether you are a human man, human in all your relations with God and other men. This means much more than the question of relations between employers and employees, for instance, as it means more than being in a fight for a clean town. It means having the spirit of Jesus Christ in all our

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human relations with men, women, and children. In one phase of it, it means the application of the Golden Rule as a matter of constant practice, but really that does not cover the whole case. It means the practice of the law of love and friendship and truth and kindness and righteousness even as Jesus did. Take the matter of kindness, for example. You remember Robert Louis Stevenson's fine word: "Let us be a little kinder than is necessary." That puts a bloom, a religious bloom, upon the most beautiful practice of life. Christianity has been called a religion for men of good will for good will among men.

You see what I am trying to say. I wish you could see how anxious I am to say it right. Last month we were thinking of our total relations

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with God. How rich and varied they are! This month and hereafter we are called to think as men of religion of our relations with other men. The relation to God does not cease. He seems a better and dearer Father because he is the Father of my brother as well as myself. And my brother is vastly dearer because we are both in the love of our Father. Each relation enriches the other. Friendship with God is immeasurably more precious because of my human friendships, and they are lifted away above all common levels by his friendship for and with us all.

You remember that in discussing our relations with God I said that more than one word is required to indicate their wealth and scope. We are his children, his friends, his servants. He is our Creator, our

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Ruler, our Father, our Friend, and very much besides. So in describing our relations to one another, the relations of man to man, man to society, we are obliged to use several words. We are friends of mankind, we are brothers, we are neighbors, we are servants, we are leaders, we are followers, we are companions—how the list might be extended! Human relations are so rich and manifold, and religion permeates them all. They are all to be held and sustained and enriched by the religious spirit and principle. Something more than just good feeling toward men is called for by our relations. Our relations are not truly met simply by right sentiments toward some men, even by right sentiments toward the unfortunate or needy. Nothing short of right character in all these rela-

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tions will meet life's true demands. "This is the office of a friend to make us do what we can," says Emerson with deep truth. In the fair, fine partnership with God each of us brings the best he has to the relation. Neither withholds anything that is good. He keeps nothing back from us, we keep nothing back from him. So in this fair, fine relation between us as men, we must bring to it the best we have. President King asks and answers a vital question thus:

"And, first, what must be the *basis* of any true friendship, human or divine? How is an ideal relationship between two persons to be established? What are the prerequisites?

"So far as I can see, the basis must be fourfold: integrity, breadth, and depth of personality; some deep

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community of interests; mutual self-revelation and answering trust; and mutual self-giving."

You see what kind of men we are required to be just because there are other men and we are related to them. We have to be at our best not only because we are sons of our Father, but because we are brothers of our brothers, friends of our friends, and companions of our companions.

I wonder if you will be willing to take the Beatitudes of our Master, our Elder Brother, and Saint Paul's chapter on love, and saturate your whole scheme of human relations with them: your friendships, your likes, your dislikes, your neighborliness, your trade and political relations, your club life, and all the rest. Will you agree to these simple comments on some of Saint Paul's words? "Love is not covetous, for

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it would scorn to profit by another's loss." "Love will not kill either suddenly with a sword or slowly by unkindness, for love gives and enhances life." "Love will not steal, either goods from the counter, money from the purse, value from the stock, or time from an employer." "Love will not be proud, for the weakness of another is a sorrow as keen as though that weakness were our own."

I am thinking about our making all our human relations religious and not simply those relations that seem to be held in the church. I notice a lot of men calling other men "brother" these days. A hotel clerk greeted a dozen assorted travelers all alike the other night, "Good evening, brother." We all liked it, especially when he did his best to treat us as though we had come home.

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Religion has been made rather too special and occasional. We used to think that a life protected by special providence was signally favored, and the more special the providence the more valuable it seemed. All that now seems a mistake. We test the value of God's good care, not by its occasionalism, but by its constancy and steadiness. God is our Father and Friend and everything else that is good all the time. And I think we men ought to be his sons, his friends, his followers all the time, in all of our lives. And you agree, do you not, that the spirit of this relation should not be occasional, but constant in all those human relations which make the best part of the earthly life? It would make a new world for us to have all our common relations thus sanctified and transformed, and the

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new world would be worth living in.

“And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him: Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets” (Matt. 22. 35-40).

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER VII

A MAN'S CHARACTER

DEAR BRETHREN: We are all familiar with the common saying, "Character is what a man really is, reputation what people think he is." And it is somewhat carelessly assumed that only character is important. Some of you also remember reading in the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" the statement that in every dialogue between John and Thomas there are at least six distinct personalities:

Three Johns { 1. The real John known only to his Maker.
2. John's ideal John.
3. Thomas's ideal John.

Three Thomases { 1. The real Thomas.
2. Thomas's ideal Thomas.
3. John's ideal Thomas.

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Long after Dr. Holmes made that analysis, Dr. James Stalker delivered his noble address on "The Four Men." He said: "You might say that **in** every man there are four men: 1. The man the world sees. 2. The man seen by the person who knows him best. 3. The man seen by himself. 4. The man whom God sees." The idea, as you see, was not original with Dr. Stalker, and probably not with the Autocrat, but each used the idea wisely, and that is about as good as to have originated it.

And each of these three men of Holmes and four men of Stalker is important. The discussion brings us right up to the question as to the kind of man any man really is. And for religion, and for a man, there is nothing more vital and fundamental than that. For the question of indi-

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vidual character is primary, even in the days of social Christianity. "At every point the social question drives one back to the antecedent question of character." Every religion must be tested by its ideals of character, its power to produce character, and its results in the way of character. The tests must be living, and not academic, but they must be strict and thorough. Especially must they take account of the poor human material out of which character is to be made.

Character, like everything else, is affected by all the forces that work upon it and produce it. The Christian character is the resultant of the perfect influences and ideals of Christianity and the imperfect human nature upon which these ideals and forces operate.

It would be easy to become meta-

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physical or theological in the discussion of this subject, and that would be all wrong. I suppose if you had had a chance to tell me your wishes as to this matter, you would have said something like this: "Tell us as plainly as possible what character is. You need not give us a definition, but only such a statement as will make it fairly clear. Then tell us how to get it, and how to keep it, and how to develop it." Of course, you would not ask how to lose it, because losing character is not religion, and therefore not part of our theme. I shall assume that you have asked me just these very positive questions, and I shall try to indicate at least the ways along which the answers lie.

And the very first thing that strikes us is the clear conviction that character is neither some vague

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thing, nor some perfectly simple thing. It is quite concrete and rather complex. Anyhow, it does not consist of a solitary quality, whether that quality be a virtue or a vice. We must be careful not to overwork the demand for simplicity. In another place I have ventured to say that "personality is not simply a list of qualities, however noble and admirable. Character is something more than characteristics." And yet character has to do with characteristics and qualities, and we cannot ignore the lists. A brilliant, living preacher has named the characteristics of Jesus as follows: "Strength, sincerity, reasonableness, poise, originality, narrowness, breadth, trust, brotherliness, optimism, chivalry, firmness, generosity, candor, enthusiasm, gladness, humility, patience, courage, indignation, reverence, holi-

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ness, and greatness." Long ago Bushnell, in his study of Jesus, did something of the same sort.

Before leaving this list, or saying anything about it, I might as well copy here one or two other similar lists not as applied to Jesus. A man, writing a letter on religion many centuries ago, said this wonderful thing: "The fruit produced by the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, generosity, trustfulness self-control." And another man of the same race, also writing a letter on religion long ago, used these wonderful words: "Do your best to supplement your faith by goodness, goodness by knowledge, knowledge by self-control, self-control by endurance, endurance by piety, piety by brotherly affection, brotherly affection by love." A modern man has named the follow-

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ing as the "Marks of a Man": "Truth, Purity, Service, Freedom, Progress, and Patience." These lists might be extended and other lists might easily be made, but that is not necessary. These qualities, as you see, are all the qualities of good men, not bad ones.

Now, character is clearly not any one of these noble qualities alone, not even the best and largest of them. I suppose you will agree with me that these virtues ought all to be in us and abound, and that we should be men of high character if they did. I cannot see how to omit any of them. Can you? I would not count it an improvement to Jesus or any of us to lack any of these qualities. It seems to me that he stands so alone in the world just because he had so many of these noble and indispensable char-

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acteristics, in such perfect balance and living unity that, taken together, they make a perfect character, all of one piece, like his seamless robe. And I judge that the test of a man's character is its likeness, or unlikeness, to this character of Jesus when measured by these perfectly admirable and necessary qualities. Perhaps, as nearly as anything can describe it, this tells us what character is: The qualities, characteristics, and virtues essential to perfect or highest manhood, held in perfect proportion and balance, and in living vital unity. Maybe it was something like this that James Martineau meant when he said, "Jesus Christ shows us in living definition what a Christian ought to be." He is the definition of manhood, life, and character. Having this sort of character is simply sharing the life

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and character of God. These are the qualities that are in him. These are the divine traits that Jesus revealed. To this sort of character Jesus came to save us men and all men. This, surely, is the one thing in the world best worth getting.

It is not easy to press this point without saying more than I have space to say as to wealth of character. How rich it seems when viewed in this light! How rich it is when these qualities abound! So many characters are so meager, so poor, so barren. This is not simplicity of character, it is simple and unlovely poverty of character. But we men were made for wealth and abundance in this regard. It is a shame to be paupers when in the realm of character we should be princes of the kingdom.

How can a man, any man, acquire

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or achieve a character such as he should have? No normal man is wholly destitute of excellence, no matter how imperfect his character is. Now, how can a man become a better man? The getting of a right character, the developing of a true and well-rounded character, the achieving of a sound and Christlike character—no matter which phrase you use, it all means the same thing. How can a man become a good man and always a better man until he reaches full-sized manhood, or the perfect stature of a man in Christ? Suppose you sit down with these lists of noble qualities before you and take account of stock, personal stock. How does your own character bear these tests or measurements? Is it suffering atrophy or obesity at any points? Does it need development or reduction at any places?

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Here is the place for one of those fine, deep contradictions in human life, hard to put in a statement, but easily understood in experience. There can be no character achieved without God, and God cannot do it without a man helping. It is all of God, it is all of man. We must work at it as if we had it all to do; we must trust God, knowing that without him we can do nothing. A lad at a camp meeting overheard a man in an adjoining tent groaning and praying as if in agony. The boy said to his mother, "What is the matter with the man?" The mother answered, "He wants to be a better man." And the lad quickly asked, "Why don't he be, then?" One must cease to do evil as if one, by ceasing, could instantly and completely be rid of evil. One must cast his burden of evil upon the

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Lord, knowing that he alone can take it away. One must learn to do well, to practice all these high and holy virtues with personal fidelity and devotion as if this alone were the way of character. One must trust Christ with an assurance that never flickers, that he alone is adequate to the creation and development of character. A child, trying to state it, said: "We must do most of the work ourselves, and God will do just that little bit that we cannot just manage, the little bit at the end. Any more help than that would be spoilings."

I know of no way to develop honesty of character except by the strict and constant practice of honesty and by an honest, square life with the God of honesty. Grace is not magical, but rational in its operations. I know of no way to

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develop kindness except by the life of kindness. Living the life of a coward does not increase courage. The constant practice of noble qualities increases and strengthens those very qualities in us.

Association with the best helps mightily. "Live with wolves and you learn to howl." It works the other way just as well. A man's outreach in the effort to measure up to worthy companions enlarges the man's own manhood. Health is contagious. "Character is caught, not taught." Long ago, for the space of three years, a dozen men lived together with one named Jesus. The dozen were just ordinary men, no better and no abler than many who are reading this letter. The holy apostles were altogether human. Some of them seem like blood relations of mine. But that great Com-

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panion of theirs had an incalculable upward pull on their lives. Or, to put it another way, the more they lived with him the more they became like him and wanted to be. One of the finest sentences in biographical literature is this: "Men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus and learned of him." Do not miss the point as to what they learned. They learned how to get away from badness and littleness into goodness and largeness; they learned the ways of life, how to rid life of evil, how to keep it from evil, and how to keep it clean and strong and useful. They saw him do it and they learned from him how. He was the master of living, of character-making in himself and other men. I do not know any better way yet than to live with him and to live like him, to submit

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yourselves wholly to his influence and to his ideals. A living writer has said: "Character is defined in the commandments as a goodness which consists in obedience to the laws. . . . Character is defined in the Beatitudes as a goodness which consists in the endeavor to attain ideals."

I have only a few lines more in which to tell you that character is not for any of us to-day a completed and finished thing. Our manifest imperfections are not to crush us into despair, if we are steadily faring forward, "working upward, working out the beast." Character is not static, but living. A living man is not a rock, he is a tree, or, what is far better, a living soul. An old lake captain once said in my hearing: "We are working away at me, God and myself, and we will get

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our job done by the end of the day. It is not done yet, but it is farther along than yesterday." Maybe I ought to have said earlier that character is what you are becoming rather than what you are. There is an enlarging and ripening experience in life and character. One of our greatest bishops once said to a friend in an hour of intimate talk: "God has not had an easy time making me what he wants me to be, but I am helping, and he is working his will in me. We shall win."

I keep thinking of those early Christian letters on religion. By common consent Christianity has had no finer character than Saint Paul. Do you remember how he put it? "I count not myself to have apprehended, but I press on." We have had no one who knew our Master better than did Saint John.

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He was thinking of character when he wrote, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Character is far from complete, the development so imperfect that we cannot even see the end—"but we shall be like him." Browning wrote:

A man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?

What a chance there is for us!
Come to Him. Follow Him. Live
with Him. Live like Him. And
some fair day, be like Him.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER VIII

KEEPING LIFE RIGHT

DEAR BRETHREN: You may remember that in one or two earlier letters in this series an unnamed man was quoted at some length. Well, to my joy, he has spoken again, this time about the maintenance of a religious life. This is what he has to say on that very important subject: "I was pretty well instructed about how to begin a religious life and think I did actually get into it in about the right way. I think, however, that there has been rather too much stress upon the beginning of the religious life and an unwholesome tendency to be constantly harking back to the gate through which I came, rather than making certain that my feet

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are now in the right way and carrying me safely and steadily in the proper direction. The gate was magnificent, and going through it a most thrilling experience, but it is a gate, nevertheless, and I cannot satisfy myself going through it over and over again. I am safely through the entrance, now how can I keep on?"

I am quite persuaded that this good man states the case for many besides himself. Men really do want to know how to keep life from evil and how to keep it up to a high level. Many men are genuinely discouraged over the tendency to sag, to run down, which their lives constantly reveal. And many others are disheartened over the frequent defeats they sustain in what are really the higher realms of their lives. These are not idle and speculative matters. They are intensely practical. They

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involve what President King called "A Rational Fight for Character." These questions have to do with those unhappy hours when a man's life gets off the key and loses tone, when a man falls away below himself and then loses heart and courage over the whole business of being religious.

Now, there are several fundamental things to remember all the time. I wish I could say them so that you would always remember and be helped by them. I hesitate to number them, or to say, "in the first place," for that sounds like preaching, and I must not preach in these letters. But listen to this: Life requires constant and careful attention in order to keep it up to tone, to keep it from getting off the key. It will sag, to change the figure, unless you watch it all the time.

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This is true of all a man's life, not of his religious life alone. The body runs down, the mind runs down, the soul runs down, the appearance runs down, and the man himself runs down unless they are all looked after.

Being useful does not keep life toned up. I have said elsewhere and often that a watch has only one business, that is, to keep time; but a watch runs down, gets out of order, and even wears out while it is faithfully doing the very thing for which it is made, while faithfully doing its duty. And it must be wound daily, cleaned and regulated regularly, repaired occasionally, parts replaced when necessary, and the whole watch completely overhauled ever and again. One does not discard watches or disregard time because of this. He accepts it

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as part of a normal life and does what is wise under the circumstances.

Pianos and organs will get out of tune, not only when standing idle or being misused, but when being used properly for the very purpose for which they exist. Life is like them. It also gets out of tune and needs to be put in the right key again and again. A wise man does not refuse to have anything to do with organs or pianos on this account. He uses them and gives them the care they require for their highest efficiency. For a watch out of order or a piano out of tune is intolerable. And at any cost a man's life must be kept at its best.

There are really two questions here in this fight for character; one, the question of keeping life from evil, the other keeping it fit and strong and growing. Let no man

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imagine that he alone faces these questions. That other man by your side there, the one who seems so clean and so strong and so exempt, has faced and is facing all the while these severe problems. No man escapes them. In some form or other they come to all men. The Man of men went over that same road. "He knows what sore temptation means." The literature of biography is alive with this story. How to keep life from evil! How to keep evil out of life! How to meet it and beat it! How to fight the good fight, or run the straight race! How to overcome and not be overcome! It sometimes seems as if all life's questions center in this group. Stalker, going to address an audience of young men, once asked a friend what he should speak about, and the friend answered:

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"There is only one subject worth speaking to young men about, and that is temptation." And Stalker classifies men around this subject, dividing them into these six groups: "Those who are being tempted; those who have fallen before temptation; those who are tempters of others; those who are successfully resisting temptation; those who have outlived their temptations; those who are assisting others to overcome." Where do you stand in this classification?

I cannot in this brief letter do more than call urgent attention to the need of watching life with all diligence in order to keep it from evil. It is a matter of life and death. Life is like a seamless robe, and evil tears it. "Your soul," said the mother of Marius the Epicurean, "is like the pure white dove which you

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are to carry across the market place unsoiled by the soot or dirt of the market place." Keeping life from evil is not a problem of speculation, but of practice. Some men fall through their physical condition or habits; others through mental practices; loose, improper memories; loose, dangerous imaginations and emotions; loose, weak wills; loose, uncontrolled thinking; others fall through their associations. It sometimes seems to men as if the universe were built so they could easily fall. But it is not. "They that be for us are more than they that be for them." God's real universe is organized, not for man's defeat, but for man's victory. The world is always Jesus Christ's world, the world in which he won his triumphs, in which he met evil and kept himself free from it. He gave evil no quar-

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ter. He did not dally with it or linger in its company. He ever turned his life to the nobler usages and practices. He resisted evil always with good. He kept himself, body, soul, and spirit always at his best. He practiced the presence of God. He held on his way. You can. You can rise if you have fallen. You can win though you are now beaten. You can prove "the expulsive power of a new affection." You can apply both resistance and counter attraction. Above all, you can prove for yourself the value of high friendship with the noble association with good and true men, and the victorious help of Jesus Christ himself.

I sometimes fear that we create upon our own minds the impression that the struggle with evil is the chief thing. Surely, that cannot be

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life's largest interest. Defending a fort can hardly be the noblest occupation of an army all the time. So the chief concern of life must be the maintenance of its fitness and the increasing of its efficiency for good. I have already spoken of the tendency life has to sag, to run down, to fall below its highest levels. The great souls of history have all felt this. The biographies of men are valuable to us because they show us how other men kept their lives fit and strong. The life of Jesus is most valuable of all. Do not make the personal life of Jesus so unlike your own as to make it unreal. Do not hold it away from your own life by one or two removes under the false impression that that is especially pious and reverent. "The kingdom of heaven is like" the things we know. The Master used

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openly all good means to raise and keep his life on the highest levels. And he did not do it just as a show, merely to set us an example. He did it because it was worth while for him.

Take the matter of prayer. We need it so much and use it so little. He seemed to need it so little and used it so much. But he prayed because prayer was good for him, not because it would be good for us. See what he said about it. See chiefly what he did about it. Prayer kept for him the channels of life open, the tides of real power flowing. He prayed because it was good for him, because he felt the need of it and knew the value of it. I have written elsewhere these words: "He did not mean to have any low moments. He purposed keeping life persistently at its highest levels. He

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was determined that his personality should project his activity as far as possible. The more he had to do, the more ready and able he must be for the doing of it. Men ought always to pray, not because of the answers they get in the ordinary sense, but because of the power true prayer brings into the life of a praying man." Jesus is the best exemplification in history of what prayer means and what it is worth.

So with the real use of the Bible as a means of keeping life toned up. You remember in the very first letter my friend said: "If I knew a better book, I would use it." That tells the whole story. Into the Bible has gone the life of men and God. Into it has gone chiefly the life of Jesus. Out of it come wisdom, strength, guidance, and inspiration for the lives of men. Its

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daily use will furnish tonic and help. No other book has done so much for men. No other men equal those who have been made mighty on this literature.

The men who have communed most with God have most effectively maintained life at its best. Many times in these letters I have repeated that wonderful phrase, "the practice of the presence of God." This practice is a habit with many from Enoch down. Sometimes designated one way, sometimes another, it means that intimate communion which brings the life of God always into the life of a man and lifts the man's life to the strength and fellowship of the life eternal.

And, finally, though I know I shall want to write a postscript, one maintains himself in excellence and in efficiency by practice. Character,

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like muscles, grows flabby when not used. A good many men are out of practice in the business of doing good. They are soft and easily wearied in consequence. I wanted to write a whole letter on a religious man's activities. Maybe I can do it yet, but if not, I must put in this word here. Jesus spent whole nights in prayer. He lived a life of constant communion with God. He met evil at every turn and beat it. He was saturated with the Old Testament, the noblest literature in existence in his day. And he went about doing good. No wonder he kept the faith. No wonder he could say of himself all the things he did say. Communion, even as the mystics communed with God, the use of the usual means of grace, and the special life of prayer and study of the Bible are all essential, but life

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cannot be maintained in inactivity. A religious man's activities are most fascinating and thrilling. A man, if he has real manliness, wants to be doing. Religion gives him his chance. And thus shall we keep life up to high levels.

Was Christ a man like us? Ah, let us try
If we then, too, can be such men as he.

With all love and prayers for us
all, I remain, dear brethren,

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER IX

THE UNITY OF A MAN'S LIFE

DEAR BRETHREN: Away back in the seventies, some time, I bought, for a small sum, a little volume, bound in green cloth, which has had an immense influence upon many men. I mean "Tom Brown's School Days," a book many of you have read. Generations were brought up on it. Matthew Arnold thought it a much overrated book, and declared it only partially represented Rugby. Perhaps so, but after more than a third of a century I can recall my sensations as I read in the preface these words about Thomas Arnold, the great Master of Rugby: "He certainly did teach us—thank God for it—that we could not cut our life into slices and say, 'In this

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slice your actions are indifferent, and you need not trouble your heads about them one way or another; but in this slice, mind what you are about, for they are important.' A pretty muddle we should have been in had we done so. He taught us that in this wonderful world no boy or man can tell which of his actions is indifferent and which not; that by a thoughtless word or look we may lead astray a brother for whom Christ died. He taught us that life is a whole, made up of actions and thoughts and longings, great and small, noble and ignoble; therefore the only true wisdom for man or boy is to bring the whole life into obedience to Him whose world we live in and who has purchased us with his blood; and that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all in his name and

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to his glory; in such teaching, faithfully, as it seems to me, following that of Paul of Tarsus, who was in the habit of meaning what he said, and who laid down this standard for every man and boy in his time. I think it lies with those who say that such teaching will not do for us now to show why a teacher in the nineteenth century is to preach a lower standard than one in the first."

All that, no doubt, seems commonplace enough, but I rarely face an audience of men in college or elsewhere without having that very page out of that dear little old volume rise before me. And I wonder, after all, if the idea is commonplace. I wonder if we are in the habit of thinking of our lives as being a unity, as being all of one piece. Anyhow, with only a few

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more letters left, it seems to me that one of them must be on the unity of life.

How torn we are by the sense of division in our lives! We are men who deal honestly with ourselves, and in our honest moments we know that there is a shameful and distressing chasm between what we know and what we do, between what we say and what we are, between our best intentions and even our highest achievements, between the first of life and the last of it. We read in an old-time letter—a man's account of himself: "I am so far from habitually doing what I want to do that I find myself doing the very thing that I hate. . . . It is easy for me to want to do right, but to act rightly is not easy. I fail to do the good thing I want to do, but the bad thing that I want not to

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do—that I habitually do. . . . When I want to do right, wrong presents itself.” And we echo his agonized exclamation, “Miserable man that I am!” And until we become theological we perfectly understand that ancient letter writer. This personal statement of his is altogether clear to us personally. But now when a man really begins to think of himself seriously and consistently, this war in his own life becomes intolerable. He must eliminate these contradictions if he can. In its worst form this thing was called “a body of death.” Surely a religious man ought to be able by some process to close the gap between what he says and what he is, between his professions and his character. Emerson once wrote, “What you are speaks so loud I cannot hear what you say.” Surely,

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there ought to be a way to close the moral chasm between a man's knowledge and his conduct; he ought to be able to get rid of these ethical cleavages, these ethical breaks, these ethical "faults," to use the geological term. In the real saints—not the cloistered saints, but the real ones—this lack of unity is reduced to the lowest terms. In Jesus it is wholly eliminated. We are full of these moral contradictions. He was wholly free from them. His life was like his seamless robe—all of one piece. He did as well as he knew, he practiced as perfectly as he preached. In him there was no gap between prayer and practice, worship and work, knowledge and conduct, vision and service, intention and achievement.

The way to cure our condition is

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to put on Christ as a garment, and to have him formed in us as a power as well as a hope. He is the solvent of life's moral contradictions. The trouble with us is that he does not have the preëminence in all things. Every thought is not in captivity to Christ as it ought to be, as it must be if we are to have relief. This is the practical peace of Christ—the peace he has and the peace he gives. No saint, or would-be saint, in all the ages has found unity of life apart from him. It is evil that really makes this mischief and discord. Let us not try to fool ourselves. It is salvation that undoes this mischief. And there is no salvation in any other. There is trouble everywhere else, but harmony in him. Sin is the cause and he is the cure of all these discords. A man is one. A mean streak in

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him spoils him all the way through. We must get the streak out. Salvation does that. It seems to fail in some men because the salvation they get is only another streak. Perfect salvation, such as Christ means to give, takes the streaks out and makes a man a new creation.

I am thinking of another kind of unity also—the unity between the first of life and the last of it; the making the line of life straight, not crooked; the giving life early the direction it ought to keep till the end. Some of you cannot now avoid a break. You must face about; you have been going the wrong way. But you can go right the rest of the way. You can make the remainder what it should be. You can head now the way you ought to go. There are two trage-

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dies, one vastly greater than the other—the tragedy of a life that has to be turned around, and the tragedy of a life that is allowed to go wrong clear to the end. And the latter is unspeakable. The gospel is for men who wish to turn about. It gives men a chance to have an old age unlike their wicked and foolish youth. That is the gospel, the good news, the grace. But even this glorious gospel cannot wipe out the fact of a wicked and foolish youth when there has been one. Turn about, if you need to, and do it now. And tell your sons, and the boys you know and love, to face right with Christ at the beginning; help them to give their lives at the very beginning the direction they ought to keep until the end. This prevents the break at the middle and the bitterness at the end.

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When Sir Philip Sidney was just a lad he wrote to his brother, "If there are any good wars, I shall attend them." All the rest of his life was a living commentary on that sentence. Cecil Rhodes, an Oxford student, hunting health in Africa, dreamed of presenting an empire to his queen. All the rest of his life is based on that. That purpose gave direction to all his years and deeds. A student in another English university, on his twenty-second birthnight, puts on record a like experience. It is Charles Kingsley who writes: "My birthnight. I have been for the last hour on the seashore, not dreaming, but thinking deeply and strongly, and forming determinations which are to affect my destiny through time and through eternity. Before the sleeping earth, and the sleepless sea and

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stars, I have devoted myself to God, a vow never (if he gives me the faith I pray for) to be recalled." And all the rest is based on that. A young lawyer, going down the Mississippi, saw some beautiful young Negro girls being sold into slavery. He turned aside and said to a friend: "Great God, if I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I will hit it hard." One later day, as President of the republic, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It was all of one piece. Far away, far back in history, a Lad twelve years old got lost from his people as they went home from the ancient camp meeting. They found the Lad in the temple asking and answering questions. With a clear look in his young eyes he said, "I must be about my Father's business." And you see the way his face is set.

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O, blessed be the boy whose face is set in the right direction so early, and blessed the parents of such a boy!

Afterward, this Lad, grown to manhood as you are, as we are, will use other words: "My Father's will"; "My meat is to do"; "I must finish"; "My Father worketh, I work"; "Not my will, but thine." The line of his life remains unbroken, the direction of it unchanged. At the end he will look His Father calmly in the face and say, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." No wonder such a life increases its efficiency with every passing day.

This is our lesson for this month. We must close the moral gaps in our lives. We must give life at once the direction and tone it should keep until the end. We must al-

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ways be attending and meaning to attend the good wars for humanity. In youth, manhood, and age we must be about our Father's business. Then through the swift years life will always be good and always better, and "the best always yet to be."

I am writing these letters to men. We are rather scarred and grizzled, but there is still a lot of hope for us. But I wonder if you men know at all what you mean and may mean to the young men and boys in your family and town. Have you been leaving the matter of religion for boys to the women of your family and church? Fathers and big brothers allow themselves to mean so little to the religious life of their sons and younger brothers, when they are meant to mean so much. Many a boy has an idea that reli-

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gion is chiefly a thing of women, for women, and by women. But a young man is tremendously impressed by the religion of an older man. A man can lead boys if only he will. And you have it in your power to set the faces of many boys in the right direction while they are boys. And you can turn other men toward the light and bring unity to their lives. Many times each year I read Matthew Arnold's wonderful poem about his noble father, and I can never restrain my emotions, can hardly keep from shouting, over these lines:

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father, alone
Conquer and come to thy good,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
Therefore, to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

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And I want your lives in themselves, and in their influence, to be all of one piece, even like the Master's own.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER X

A MODERN MAN'S MODERN BIBLE

DEAR BRETHREN: You may or may not remember a sentence which occurred early in these letters: "If I knew a better book, one that did me more good, I should use it." That sentence fairly starts what I want to say on this subject. I have put the word "modern" twice in the title of this letter, not as a challenge, nor as a reflection upon the past, but solely in recognition of the fact that we are modern men and because of my firm assurance that the Bible is also modern, a book with value and meaning for us modern men. This does not institute comparison between ourselves and our fathers, nor between their Bible and ours. We must live

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our lives. They lived theirs. We must have our Bible and it must fit into our lives. I think we rather exaggerate the extent to which the men of the older day were really Bible men, but all that is apart from our necessities and life.

To the modern man two things appear true? First, that there has been a lot of controversy about the Bible, which seems to have changed or modified its place as an authority. Second, that the Bible is a very big book which there is not much time to read after he has finished the daily papers and the magazines. I am going to admit both of those propositions. The authority of the Bible has been greatly modified since we were boys, but the modification has been in the direction of a larger and more vital rather than a smaller and less living authority. The Bible

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has a place of real power in thought, morals, and life to-day that our fathers never dreamed of. This is especially true among scholars. Really there has not been a day since we were born when scholars were paying such attention to the Bible or were reckoning with it so carefully as to-day.

It is true that the Bible is a large book and these are busy days, and current literature is very voluminous. The current literature is rather compelling and imperious. It not only keeps us from Bible-reading, but it keeps us from reading a lot of the best books in the world. Plato and Ruskin and Emerson have rather a sorry chance with an unknown reporter or a well-known magazine writer. But that, after all, is not the question. The real question is this: What is

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the Bible good for? And how can we get the largest benefit and value out of it? The answers vary. In certain ages the Bible was thought to be chiefly good for theology and for religious argument. If a man could quote a "Thus saith the Lord," he was mighty in argument. I remember well some debaters of this sort whom I heard in my youth. It seems to me now that the emphasis upon controversy was rather overdone and that it did not much conduce to religion. At other times the Bible has been thought valuable chiefly as an ethical code or moral guide. This theory lays great stress upon the Ten Commandments, the moral precepts, the regulations and specific directions for conduct of all sorts. One of the historic catechisms declares that "the Scriptures principally teach what man is to

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believe concerning God and what duties God requires of man." There is a view current in our own day that regards the Bible chiefly from the literary viewpoint and exalts it as the supreme literature of the world.

And all these views have truth in them, large and important truth, which cannot be ignored without loss. But you men are chiefly interested in life, and a book to rule or lure you must be valuable chiefly for life. And this is the value of the Bible for men. Any book gets its real value for and grip upon life in proportion to the amount of real life there is in it and the amount of real life that comes out of it. Into the Bible life has gone the life of men and women, the life of God himself, the life of Jesus Christ above all. It has a good many

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qualities and it lacks some, but it is not lacking in life. How the life stirs in the Book! Centuries make no difference. The men and women who once walked into the pages and chapters of the Bible still walk before the eyes of the world. Into the Bible went the life of man and the life of God. They lived together, men and God, together working out human destiny under divine guidance. Human hopes, doubts, fears, affections, hates, courage, cowardice, bigness, littleness, obedience, disobedience—they are all here, just as they are all in the lives of men to-day. The Bible is said to find us as no other book does. The reason is that we ourselves are actually in its pages. Divine purpose, patience, wrath, wisdom, love, grace—they also are all here. We do not bother our-

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selves in these letters about the question of inspiration. We find the Spirit of God coming out of the Bible as we use it and we conclude that the Spirit must have gone into it. We conclude that it was inspired because we find that it is inspiring.

What is it good for, then? It is good for the lives of men because it is the record of the lives of other men in whom and with whom God worked and dwelt; good for the lives of men because there is so much and such life in it; good because the Bible gives us so full and luminous a record of what used to be called "God's dealings with men"; good above all because it brings us the story and knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is our sure guide to Jesus, and through him to God, and then to life that is life indeed.

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For many years I was bothered and disturbed about the Bible, regarding it with a kind of false reverence and an unnatural regard because of my belief that its origin was in some way magical. I used to wonder how an inspired man felt while he was inspired, whether he was inspired all the time, or whether he was inspired only while writing; and inspiration seemed like a sort of elevated trance. But the net effect was to put the Bible into an unnatural relation to everything. Then came the radiant day when I learned late what I ought to have learned early, that the Bible was first life and then literature, first an experience, then a record, first the long years of God and man working together in the unfolding development of God's grace and purpose and man's education, then the noble account of it, and

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from that radiant day the Bible has had a place all its own, but a wholly new and better place.

Phillips Brooks says it in these words: "The New Testament is a biography. Make it a mere book of dogmas, and its vitality is gone. Make it a mere book of laws, and it grows hard and untimely. Make it a biography, and it is a true book of life. Make it the history of Jesus of Nazareth, and the world holds it in its heart forever."

From Professor Bruce I obtained another view, not contradictory, but alike satisfying. It is stated in these words: "Its contents chiefly relate to a purpose of grace and its great watchword is redemption." So for many years now I have thought and spoken of the Bible as the book of life and the book of redemption. Many questions that I once carried

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to it for answer I no longer carry to it; many demands that I once made upon it I make no more. It is no longer "a repository of infallible information upon a lot of miscellaneous subjects," but it is a sure guide to the Redeemer, a lamp to the feet, and a light to paths of men in this world. Many things I fail to find in its pages, but I do not fail to find the face of Christ and the way of life.

And thus we get our insight into how there came to be a Bible. There came to be a Bible because there was a divine movement for man's redemption and the salvation and guidance of his life, and this is the record of it. There is no other book like it. No other has in it such record of grace, such avenues to grace. No other has in all its pages such a figure as the Redeemer,

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who once came among men. In no other book can a man find his way to the Redeemer and learn with him and of him the way to live here and hereafter. You think this is an old book, and so it is, but it is alive with the ever-living presence of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. A Hindoo asked me last year why he should read the Bible, and in what respects it is superior to other sacred books. The answer is easy: The Bible is the sure record of how God came to man in many ways, and perfectly in Jesus Christ, and it is the sure guide to man seeking to come to God through Jesus Christ. If any other book contained a worthier revelation of God, or a better person than Jesus Christ, or a truer light on the way out of sin into righteousness, or a better way to

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live, I would take it at once. There is no better. "There will be no better book until a better life than Jesus's life has been lived."

Just because it has this quality of life in it, and because this kind of life comes out of it into the lives of men; just because God put himself into the life of which the Bible is the literature and into the literature itself, and because if with all their hearts men shall truly seek him, they shall in and through these pages ever truly find him; just because the Bible contains the story of Jesus Christ and because the words he speaks are spirit and life; just because the Bible, as the book of redemption and life, is the most modern book in the world, I ask you modern men to saturate your lives with it. Courage, faith, hope, love, mercy, truth, service went into

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it and are in it. Courage, faith, hope, love, mercy, truth, and service come out of it. Is it the book of redemption to you? Is it the book of life to you? Have you found in it the way of salvation and the way to live? For us men the chief danger about the Bible is that it shall be more revered than read, more honored than used, set apart in a place by itself instead of being made a real influence in our lives. Altogether too many of us stand through life as strangers outside the Bible. I know of nothing better to do with the Bible than to read it and use it. And the best thing modern scholarship has done has been to recover the Bible for practical, vital use.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER XI

A RELIGIOUS MAN IN MODERN SOCIETY

DEAR BRETHREN: This subject has broken into more than one of these letters already. It has a way of breaking in. Religion is no longer, if it ever was, a purely individual thing, a thing between God and one man. — Always there is another man. Some of the Master's prayers have been answered without any effort on our part. Even this negative request, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world," has had rather a large answer. For weal or woe, for comfort or discomfort, for fidelity or dodging, for shirking or service, the modern religious man is surely in the midst of human life. He is no

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hermit. He may not be much of a hero in the strife, but the strife goes on all around him all the time. What, then, shall he do and be?

Well, first of all, he can really be a modern man. Being alive this year does not make him a modern man any more than wearing good clothes makes a man a gentleman. A keen student has pointed out that current society contains a lot of primitive men and women, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, whose ideals, passions, motives, standards of right and wrong, all belong to men and women in the savage state. Their habits are barbaric in their essence. Their faith is antediluvian and superstitious, their attitude to society that of the marauder or pirate. And certain of these contemporary savages have a frightful kind of pride in being savages.

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They flout all this modern sentiment. They boast of their satisfaction with things that are old. They resent the better views of God, the new spirit of brotherhood, the social feeling which is in the very air, the new humanity, the spirit of Christ in the relations of men. When their pastor speaks of any of these things they tell him to preach the gospel.

So I say you can be a modern man, quick and responsive to those forces which are making a better world, and are active in shaping the coming day so that it will be a day of the Lord. I think every one of us ought to sit down and carefully think himself over in the light of a question like this: "Am I contemporary of my own contemporaries or of some others, far past or far future?"

So too you can be a man of

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spiritual life and authority. That word "authority" we resent in our modern republican-democratic life. As Charles Dudley Warner once said: "The Western man—meaning the American man—knows no masters, not even the old masters." But we do not object to exercising authority. We rather like that. Well, here is our chance. The world is waiting for men who have real spiritual power and can exercise genuine spiritual leadership; men who know the way of the spiritual life because they have gone over it; men who can point the way because they are wise in spiritual things; men who can so exhibit spiritual power that other men will follow them in the spiritual realm—never were such men more in demand. We have grown weary of managers and manipulators of hu-

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man life. The age craves men of spiritual power. We have men of learning, men of capacity, men of energy, men of courage, men of culture. We need them all. The age is not lacking in material forces or unfamiliar with material standards. There is a word in the Bible about the order of the natural and spiritual. We seem still to be in the period of the natural. We lay our emphasis upon business principles and business administration. Indeed, this seems the new infallibility. When a man wants to say the final word he declares that he speaks as a plain business man, and he means that there is nothing more to be said.

Now, I make no attack upon any of this in this letter, but I venture to say to you men that the gospel standards are not material, but

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spiritual. Love, self-sacrifice, the life of the Spirit, the victories of the cross, and peace—all these are in the Christian ideal. And the final test of men and nations is their conformity to the standards of the higher life and their ability to speak with spiritual authority.

So too you can be men of moral leadership. This is not quite saying the same thing over again. Authority over evil Jesus exercised like a King, and authority over evil he conferred like a King. He meant men to rid the world of evil. He did not mean that they should live apart from the world, or, living in it, be beaten by it. He meant that they should live in it and be victorious over it. Some of you men to whom I am writing have never struck a moral note so that it could be heard. You have been con-

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formists, followers, and some of you have been trimmers and cowards, as, in many cases, your fathers were before you. You have quoted freely and easily the old words, "I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet." You mean by it that you cannot guess what will happen in the future. But that is not the real meaning. The prophet's function is not chiefly foretelling the future. He speaks chiefly the truth to his age, not chiefly the truth about future ages. And there are men—some of you are such men—whose fathers never spoke one brave word against wrong, and who themselves have never spoken one brave word against wrong. They have been afraid it would hurt business or something else. Hardly any word is sadder than that, "I have not the spirit of a prophet, nor had my

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father. He never lifted up his voice for a great cause, nor have I. We have been safe men." Such men forget that

'Tis man's perdition to be safe
When for the truth he ought to die.

You cannot guess or foretell the future, but you can go far toward forming the future. One brave, true word against wrong, for right, has more than once changed history's course.

Surprise was once expressed in the words, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Nobody expected it. Nobody expects it of a lot of men. They are not counted upon. Their fathers were not. There have been two generations or more all alike in their utter lack of moral leadership and passion. They have not shared God's counsels nor spoken God's message to their age. Great causes

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have come and gone, have been defeated or victorious, but these unprophetic fathers and sons have had no part in the Lord's battle. I do not see how you can endure it. And especially if your fathers were not prophets and spoke no brave words for right and against wrong, do I see how you can keep out of the prophetic ranks. You ought to redeem the family name. Your son is entitled to a better heritage than yours. There will not be too many prophets.

I heard a man once say that if all God's people were prophets there would be an over-supply. He had the false and professional view. No, what a day it would be if all God's people were prophets; if all had the spirit to speak forth for God and humanity, against all wrong, for all truth and righteousness! How does

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this come to pass? By sharing the life and counsels of the great Prophet of all until he is formed in you. Then men will note when you speak that you have been with Jesus and learned of him. They did that once. It can happen again. "To see the truth and tell it, to be accurate and brave about the moral facts of our day, to this extent the Vision and the Voice are possible for every man of us."

Once more, you can be men of human sympathy. I do not mean of pity or charity or condescension. These are quite too prevalent, even in the republic. We are a republic, but we are not very republican; a democracy, but not very democratic. The caste system in India is the curse of the country. It arises and smites you in all its hideous and ugly forms a hundred times a day.

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And then you think of home and your Church and shudder to remember how far another caste system has taken possession of our American life. There is no need that I should mention the proofs or give the illustrations. You know them. You know the snobbery, the selfishness, the hard lines between men, the modern "man's inhumanity to man." And part of it is on one side of the cruel social or racial or other line and part of it on the other, and on either side it is intolerable. I am writing to men of all castes. You know the conditions. Break them. Establish human sympathy between men, not pity and not charity, but the sympathy which is equal to love and justice. Establish rights, your own and others, on the secure basis of right. It is worth while to be a

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man and to be alive for such a task as this.

There are some unforgettable pictures of that Other Man, our Elder Brother. You can shut your eyes and see him feeding the hungry, healing the blind and the lepers, raising the dead, giving new characters to the abandoned and outcast, helping workingmen at their toil, telling all of them the truth they needed to hear, and scourging certain types of wrong. But you cannot recall in all his wonderful life one act of condescension or show of unbrotherliness. Somehow, he did what so many of us find so hard—he just lived as a man among men and all manhood felt it. Twenty-five years ago I asked a famous judge in Ohio a question that made us both smile because it was so large and in a way so foolish. But

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I still had youth's enthusiasm, which so many of us have so largely lost. Neither age nor the age had chilled me, and I asked him what was the most difficult thing in modern life. The judge grew silent. I can see him yet across the years. Then he answered, "The most difficult thing is to get the spirit of Jesus to prevail perfectly in the relations of men." O men, these are not holiday letters I am writing simply to fill a few pages. Pages can go blank, but men cannot live without human sympathy, the republic cannot last without love and justice, and the spirit of Jesus must, somehow, be made to prevail. And this is the fairest chance that the modern man has in modern society.

The late William Newton Clarke urged the age to do three things in this time of transition. He urged us

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to keep the faith, to keep an open mind toward truth, and to enlarge our hearts. Men are so ready to do one or even two of these things when they ought to do them all. But, surely, the religious man in modern society must do them all. He must believe in Christ, he must keep an open mind toward all truth, and he must love even with Christ's love. He must forswear aristocratic exclusiveness, class distinction, and race hatreds, and live with men as men, even as Jesus did. And this is modern society's high call to the modern religious man.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER XII

A MAN'S RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

DEAR BRETHREN: Religion has so many sides, so many beautiful features, that I wonder it could ever have seemed the narrow thing it has so often appeared to be. Over and over I have said to myself that I must do my best to make religion appear to you as the rich, abundant, wonderful thing it really is. Indeed, that seems to be about the best thing that can be done for any men or any age. The great ages have been those ages having a full and complete conception of religion; the meager, thin, and imperfect periods those "laying the whole stress of religion upon any part of it." And this is true of persons as of periods.

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I hesitated about the title for this letter because experience has in so many minds come to have a theological rather than a personal meaning, though this, of all the things connected with religion, is most personal. Just because it is so personal, so individual, it is not easy to write or speak of it without the possibility of confusion. Here more than anywhere else is there need of large allowance for individual differences of temperament and characteristic. Much mischief has been wrought by the effort to impose a common or particular type of experience upon all classes, and vast pain has been suffered by many because of the absence of an experience like that possessed by some outstanding individual or group. Particularly has the imposition of an adult type of experience

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upon child life been fruitful of mischief and confusion.

Now I know very well that many of you men, if you were writing to me, would say something about like this: "I can understand religious duties and can do them, can comprehend religious relations and enjoy them, but I do not seem to have the kind of experience some other men have and I sometimes wonder whether I am religious at all. I had no such dramatic conversion as some men seem to have had and no such religious emotion as some men seem constantly to experience." That is among men a common attitude of mind, keeping some from becoming religious and some others in a constant state of discontent with what they have, and uncertain desire for something else, without their knowing quite what it is.

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The very first word to say to you in affectionate answer to this statement is this: "Seek and cultivate your own religious experience and do not be disturbed because it is unlike the apparent experiences of other men." Men profoundly differ from one another and from themselves. Experience is no more uniform than disease. Each human soul is a distinct thing, each human life unlike every other. They say that no two birds sing exactly alike, and even that a faithful and intelligent shepherd can distinguish each individual sheep from the rest of the flock. No man is like any other man, and no man is all the time like himself. We used to hear about the four great divisions of mankind, "the sanguine, the nervous, the melancholic, and the phlegmatic." It sounds rather fine, and apart from

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our knowledge of men is rather fine. Such a division can be used in books, in novels say, where you can make your nervous man always appear nervous and your phlegmatic man always phlegmatic, but in actual life every man belongs in greater or less degree to all four divisions.

Do not expect, therefore, a religious experience exactly like some other man's, nor be disturbed by temperamental variations in your own. Paul was not like Peter; John was not like either of them; Luther and Wesley were not like each other nor like anybody else. John Bunyan and General Booth were as different as two men could well be. Yet each of these had his own experience of Christ and of salvation from sin, his own witness of the Spirit, his own stroke of em-

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phasis, his own growth and development, his own form of statement, his own angle of vision. Christ was the center of the experience of each, the common object of devotion and affection and the undisputed Lord and Master of each life.

And the experience of each changed and grew with the changing years. The beginning did not remain for either the perpetual test of the experience of later years. I know men who throughout life lay their supreme emphasis upon the fact and date of their conversion, others who can neither name date nor place. This also is partly a matter of the individual. But this is my word to you: Seek and maintain your own experience and do not be disturbed because it does not seem to be like another's. God has many a good way into the

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kingdom and an infinitely varied way of life in it. Men state their experiences differently, and the same man states his differently at different times. Some men are reserved and restrained in speech, others free and ready. Some ever use the quiet colors in language, others habitually the rich and striking colors. The reality is the common touch with Christ. Be disturbed if you have not that or, having had it, no longer have it. Be not disturbed even though your speech about it seems subdued, if your consciousness of it is sure and steadfast. And be sure that it is an experience of Christ rather than an experience of an idea or an emotion. Some men are in love with loving, some in love with their beloved. You can tell the difference. Some men confess their experiences, others confess their

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Christ. Some talk most of love, others most of the beloved. The experience of one centers in himself, which is not a good center; the experience of another centers in Christ, always a good center. The experience of one works out specially into activity, of another into character, of another into feeling, of another into talk. And the outcome depends upon many things, but chiefly always upon the man himself.

And yet we must not overemphasize the individuality of experience so as to forget the brotherhood, the fellowship, of it. A keen writer puts it thus: "When Paul prays that 'we may be strong to apprehend with all the saints the love of Christ,' he is indicating the fact that it is only possible to grasp the dimensions of the love of Christ on

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a basis of fellowship. It takes all of us, and all of us together, to compass the vastness of the love of Christ. It is only in fellowship, by making common stock of our Christian experience, that we can gain a real apprehension of its entire content; and it is therefore only in fellowship that we can realize a balanced, wholesome, individual Christian experience. It is one of the commonplaces of our observation that the solitary unattached Christian invariably becomes a religious crank. Idiosyncrasies of doctrine are usually the products of isolation—for soundness of doctrine rests in the last resort upon soundness of experience. Sound doctrine is the child of a normal, balanced, all-round Christian experience."

I do not doubt that many of you are thinking that a man's religious

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experience is what comes to him and not at all what he makes it; just as many men think it chiefly a matter of emotion or feeling and not chiefly a matter of will. Horton declares that "we make our own religious experience." That is rather startling. It puts so much responsibility upon us. We have been accustomed to think that religious experience is wholly the gift of God, and this turns all that upside down. If this be true, it makes us responsible for the meagerness, the poverty, the inferiority, the mediocrity of our experiences. We have had some small comfort, vague and uncertain to be sure, in pitying ourselves because of the character of our experiences.

What is the truth about this? Religious experience is all from God and all from man. He gives the

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great gifts of pardon, redemption, adoption, friendship. We do not create them nor invent them, nor even discover them. But we surely determine what all this will mean to us. It is all a gift from God, it is all a work of the will within. My experience, my relation to God, and my friendship with Christ are all absolutely conditioned by my own will toward them all. He says, "Follow me," and walks off into his world of help for other men. O will within me, make quick, full response! There is companionship and friendship in your decision or there is loss to you and to Him. He says, "Learn of me," and leads out into the vast realm of that truth that sets men free. Quick, quick, my will, after him, with him, for the way of truth is opening to you, the experience of

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truth stretching there ahead like a shining path, with the Master walking in it. He says, "Believe me," and new life, freedom from sin, victory over appetite, triumph over temptation are in his hands, his tones, his wonderful eyes, his heart. I have no experience, but I will get it by taking him at his word. He says, "Repent and believe the gospel." It does not sound so theological from his lips as from some others, and, looking into his face, a man can see what he means. Life is wrong. He wants it set right; a man wants it set right. Together they work at it. Life is at fault, stained and ugly, with evil tendencies and habits. He wants it cleansed, and straightened, and its tendencies turned about it. The man wants all that too. And the power and love of God reach down,

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and the will and longing of man reach up. Somewhere they meet—the distance is not great—and an experience is begun. Maybe the man will shout, maybe he will not. It all depends upon the kind of man he is. But the angels will set up a perfect tumult of joy over it. And a man becomes aware of God's presence as a help and strength; aware of personal fellowship with Jesus Christ that becomes so intimate at last that nothing else on earth is so sweet; aware of forgiveness and adoption and the witness of the Spirit; aware of strength and hope and courage coming from this companionship with a Friend unseen but real; aware of new meanings in the familiar words of Scripture and of new joy in prayer and service. And it will not matter whether a man is chiefly sanguine,

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chiefly nervous, or chiefly phlegmatic, his religious experience will be his own and will be rich and full and steadfast. Religious experience will not be something making a part of a man's life; it will fill and permeate the whole of his life. Righteousness as an experience in life, love for men as an experience in life, being forgiven and forgiving as an experience in life, having faith and hope and courage and self-control and patience and charity as an experience in life—all this would transform the lives of men. But this is not what men mean when they talk of their religious experience. No, but they would mean all they now mean, and all this also if experience ceased at once to be conventional and partial and became vital and complete. Why are we so slow to enter when

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the way is so fair, the life so noble, the goal so sure?

One note has come out again and again in these letters. I hear it coming again and am not sorry. What do you think those early men thought of religious experience after three years of life with that other Man? You can tell what they thought by what they said and did and were. They evidently thought of religious experience as the sharing of his life, as friendship with him, as slowly or swiftly gaining his qualities from him. They brought their soiled, broken, imperfect lives to him. They yielded themselves to his influence and guidance, set him before them as an ideal, received from him the gifts and graces he imparted. It is not easy to define. It was really an experience of him. They were his disciples. Men took

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knowledge of them that they had been with Christ and learned of him. Sharing his life, beholding his face, they were transformed into the same image. That for them was religious experience. He is the same yesterday, when they lived, to-day, when we live, and forever, when we shall all live. And religious experience is receiving, sharing, and living the life of God which in many divine ways is divinely imparted to the lives of men.

I am anxious about your beliefs, your relationships, your lives in all respects, and for this cause I am most concerned about your experience of God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER XIII

A MAN'S ACTIVITIES

DEAR BRETHREN: Do you remember when you first heard the words "a good man"? In my extreme youth my parents always spoke of the devil as "the bad man" and of God as "the good man." I have never quite got over a liking for that way of thinking and speaking. But I recall yet the first man I ever associated with the idea that he was a good man. And I wondered, in my small, boyish way, what made him a good man, and how it was that he was a good man. It was not simply that he was a church member. Not all the men in the church were called good men. It perplexed me that they were not. It does yet, even more painfully now than then.

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I remember my final conclusion as to the man in question. I concluded that he was a good man because he meant to be good and meant to do good. That was a boy's philosophy. It has been elaborated a good deal since then, modified some, chiefly by addition, but never abandoned. The motive of genuine goodness and the practice of genuine goodness still seem to lie at the heart of the whole matter. The infinite Good Man, whom I loved as a boy and love vastly more now, seems to be the perfect embodiment of good will and good deeds. And one of the sentences about his wonderful Son that satisfies me most is the one which says, "He went about doing good." If there were nothing else said about him, it seems to me that all other men of good will ought to follow

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him without question because of this.

Now, how shall I begin to speak of your activities as religious men? Surely not by making a list, even a useful and interesting list, of things for you to do. Does not this whole question of a religious man's activities root farther back in the will and motive to do good? Did Emerson say something like this?—"Men do not ask what you do half so much as what it is that makes you do it." The motive is really the vital thing. Lacking it, there will be no activities worth while; lacking pure motive, there will be no noble and unselfish activities; lacking large and expanding motives, there will be no lasting activities; and lacking high motives, you will not become larger and better men all the while you are doing good and useful

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things. Really, then, the first question I should ask about your activities is not what you are doing, but whether you have the motive to be active at all. A list of things to do would be of no service to you if your motive is clouded, or exhausted, or flattened out. A soldier of the Civil War was telling me that he was shot twice in battle, "once by a spent ball." The aim was good, and the bullet was good, but the motive was exhausted. That, really, is the explanation of the utter futility and ineffectiveness of a lot of so-called Christian activity. The ball is spent before it strikes.

The second thing I wish to say about this matter of activities is still not to give you a list of things to do, but some principles to determine what you shall do. There

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is tremendous perplexity in practical life over apparently conflicting duties. There ought to be some fairly steady, sensible principles for men's guidance. They will not save you from doing hard thinking. They ought not to do that. That would destroy character instead of developing it. Good men must not become good machines even in the business of doing good. Many writers have discussed this matter. There are many lists of principles relating to our duties. Perhaps this is as good as any: "We must observe the laws of nearness, aptitude, urgency, and size." No one of you can do everything there is to do, nor everything he would like to do. You must choose. Many men never see a near duty. They are always dreaming of big things they would do somewhere

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else; always forgetting to be faithful over a few things while having their eyes fixed and hearts set on being rulers over many things. Many strong men are reformers away from home, philanthropists to every one except their needy neighbors, sort of philanthropists at large, strong in the lodge, indifferent at home.

Likewise many men utterly ignore their own special aptitudes in determining their activities. Men do not always know their own capacities or lack of them. They need help in order to discover what they can do best. The music of many a church is ruined by some kindly soul who thinks he can lead the choir and is permitted to do so because he volunteers and is so faithful and willing. The finances of some churches are forever in a

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tangle because they are managed by some willing, incapable brother who cannot manage his own. And many able, capable men hold aloof from the activities in which they would shine, and exhaust their skill in criticism of those who do try but are incompetent. Now, look the facts in the face. There is something that will not be well done unless you do it. Do not sit on the bleachers, eloquently finding fault with the blundering but earnest players doing their best. Get into the game with your knowledge, your skill. The value of your kicking depends upon where you do it and what you kick. The ball is to be got across the goal. And every man must do the thing he can do best in the great game.

And the third of these laws is the law of urgency. I wonder how

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many of you men have over your desks that little motto, "Do it now." You apply that in your business. To-morrow will not do. You must be prompt. But in religious activities? It seems to me that the King's business is almost paralyzed by superfluous deliberateness. You are not religiously lazy, certainly not, but your calmness in the face of religious duties is really excessive.

The fourth rule is the rule of size, which, being interpreted, is that every man is to do the largest work he can do; that when there is a choice between the significant and the insignificant, the large and the small, the important and the unimportant, every man must choose the significant, the large, the important according to the measure of his aptitude and opportunity. If you

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have five talents of power, do not consume them upon a one-talent task. Do not waste or exhaust first-class abilities upon fourth-class activities.

These are, in the main, the laws that should govern our activities. I know how unsatisfactory they are, and how they cannot save a man from using his own mind all the time in their application. They will, however, if conscientiously applied, save a man from the wholly haphazard, uncontrolled, undirected activity which marks most men's lives. These rules must work together. No one or two of them alone will answer as a basis for a rich, full life. A good man looks after his family, but that is not the only thing a good man does. He also helps to save the city, the commonwealth, and the world. The ac-

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tivity of a man must cover the world in its scope; he must pray for and seek to bring in the kingdom. That is large and commanding; but if a man interested in the kingdom neglects his own household, he is worse than an infidel.

All the time in writing you these letters I have been thinking of that other Man. Somehow he seems to be the key to all these important matters. We were interested in his beliefs, his habits, his relations. They all seemed good. So with his activities. They all seem good. You remember when John the Baptist, that strenuous, urgent soul, grew doubtful and impatient and sent word to the Master to declare himself. John thought things ought to go faster and be more dramatic. And this was Jesus's reply: "Go and tell John the things which ye

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hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good tidings preached to them." He brings good news and he does good deeds. More than that could hardly be said. And doing good deeds was his habit. It is a lesson in activity just to watch him. I suppose some of the men who saw him often were lazy like some of us. Our age and country have no monopoly of laziness. But a lazy man or an idle man must have been made frightfully uncomfortable by the diligence, the energy, the sustained activity of Jesus.

And I am not now thinking chiefly of his miracles. It is our easy habit to think that if we could do such extraordinary things we should be at it all the time. But

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that is not true. The life of Jesus was not a startling succession of wonders. He went about doing good all the time, but not doing wonders all the time. The remarkable thing is not the occasional miraculous exhibition of his power, but the constant, common, ordinary application of it to life. He was all the time comforting, cheering, encouraging, correcting, loving, helping, inspiring men and women in need. One of my friends is a mathematical genius. He can do those bewildering sums like adding five or six columns of figures at once. He does not set great store by his ability to do the extraordinary. He prizes much more highly the ability to perform life's daily sums with accuracy. When he was doing the amazing things I never seemed to be in his class.

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But one day when I found him trying to find an error in his check-book, a simple blunder of subtraction which affected his bank balance, a strange sense of kinship arose within me. If certain features of Jesus's life stood alone, he would appear to men like a hero of mythology, but his life is so made up as to touch our lives with a sense of its kinship. A believing man can understand the things Jesus believed; a filial man can comprehend Jesus' sense of his own Sonship and God's Fatherhood; a praying man is not confused by Jesus's habits of prayer; an active man with the spirit of service and of sacrifice will perfectly appreciate the Master's activities. He will understand the motive and the spirit of Jesus. Really, this is the test: in the face of your Master's devotion and ac-

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tivity how does your own life look to you? How do you think it looks to him? Is the motive to activity present powerfully in your life as in his? Have you, as had he, always the will to do? Are you compelled to whip yourself into the performance of such tasks as he performed with zest? Do you do doggedly what he did joyfully?

You may think that I ought to have made a list of activities for you. And what a list I could have made! Sir Philip Sidney, when only a lad, wrote to his brother: "If there are any good wars, I shall attend them." And what wars there are just now!—wars for Christ, wars for humanity; wars for men, wars for women, wars for children; wars at home, wars abroad; wars calling for all the soldierly spirit and heroic temper alive in the

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world this day. And the thing that is lacking is not the call but the response. Of what use is a list of activities to a man with neither will nor motive, with neither heroism nor energy? The question of your activities at last goes back to your personal sharing of the life of Him who went about doing good. I would not like the curse of Meroz to fall on you:

Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of Jehovah,
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof,
Because they came not to the help of Jehovah,
To the help of Jehovah against the mighty.

Nor do I want any of us to hear spoken to us such words as those with which Henry IV greeted Crillon, who had been absent when a battle was fought:

"Go and hang yourself, brave Crillon, we fought at Arques and you were not there."

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Some day we shall come face to face with the Master of all good work, and I want him to say to each of us, "Well done." We shall really never deserve it, but if we do our wisest and best, he will say it.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.

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LETTER XIV

THE ENDLESS LIFE

DEAR BRETHREN: This is the last of these letters, and I am nowhere near through with what I want to say. There are at least as many more first-class subjects upon which I want to write to you. But I must let them all go for the present and write only this one letter on The Endless Life.

This is a subject somewhat banished from recent talk and speech, but coming back into its own again in a new and better way. Men wearied once of the excessive talk of the hereafter and cried out against it. They insisted that the present life was the one thing with which religion had to do. They insisted that harps or fires in the future were

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not so important as current heavens and hells; that recognition of friends hereafter was not as urgent as the recognition of brothers right here. The age became practical—a few years ago—and made a new religious speech, a new appeal, a new program, even a new hymnology.

A lot of that reaction was perfectly good and wholesome. The present world is a better world because of it. The present life is more humane and altruistic because men have been forced to face it. It has done us all good to think soberly of the life that now is. But it never will do to forget everything else while you are devoting yourself to one thing, no matter how good. The vein of exclusiveness is not so valuable as the "vein of comprehensiveness" in all these matters. The life that is to come has

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immense practical meaning in the life that now is. And there is a wholesome return, not to the exclusive consideration of the future, but to its sane consideration. We are trying now to hold to the sense of the unity of life and to keep all that is good, active, and vital.

The endless life seems necessary as a daily force and power. We do not seem able to do our best in this practical world if this is all there is of it. Nothing is good except the best. Only the perfect will satisfy at last. Of course I know that many brave, fine men, not clear or sure about the future, took Matthew Arnold's position and did the best they could. You remember what he said:

Hath man no second life? *Pitch this one high!*
Sits there no Judge in heaven our sin to see?
More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
Was Christ a man like us? *Ah! let us try*
If we, then, too, can be such men as he!

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Those are noble words. They make every real man who reads them straighten himself to meet their call in letter and spirit. I remember seeing the lines, written in Arnold's own handwriting, in a certain private library in New York. They seemed like a strong man's clear appeal to all men, especially to those who had in any measure lost faith. But the note is resolute and grim rather than exultant and triumphant. Humanity living nobly on an "if" is an inspiring spectacle, but men like us cannot always or long live on an "if."

I set over against these five lines the prayer of Dean Latimer, my old teacher in theology, who taught us so much more religion than he did theology. Old students of Boston will recall the familiar, earnest phrase that came out at the close of

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every prayer: "Save us with the power of an endless life." When I heard it first it did not much move me. When I heard it next I thought it a pet phrase such as men like to use even in their prayers. But I learned better than that. It was not a pet phrase, a favorite well-sounding sentence. It was not a prayer that we might live forever. It went vastly deeper than that both in Latimer's life and his prayer. It was the prayer that men living in time, living in illness often, living in weariness, living where the tides grow feeble and the energies flag, should be saved with the power, the strength, the almightiness of a life beyond the reach of death, saved with the power of an indestructible life. It was not a prayer that we should be saved from dying, but should be free from

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the lifelong slavery to dying by this life that death cannot touch. I can easily recall, across the lapse of more than thirty years, the evening when these words, spoken again in that great, quiet man's prayer, came to me like a new, fresh gospel of power. A hundred things fell into right relations under this influence and have never wholly been disturbed in the years since.

You see, I am trying to put this whole question so that we shall get the sense of eternity under our sense of time, the sense of the indestructible under our sense of the perishable, the sense of the immortal under our awful sense of mortality; that we should know whence we came and whither we go, even as we take up life's lowly tasks; that this sense of the life that death cannot reach will give us zest and power

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in the things of this life; that behind determined fidelity like Arnold's shall go rapturous conviction like Paul's and serene, strong assurance like the Master's; that we shall know for ourselves as we toil that we do not labor in vain; that we shall know for ourselves that

God's greatness flows round our incompleteness;
Round our restlessness his rest.

I am writing to some scholars, to others full of great plans, men often torn with the sense of life's brevity, and I am asking them to gather their apparatus and make their plans for unending work, crying out with Browning:

What's time? Leave now for dogs and apes;
Man has forever.

For Latimer's prayer will be answered for men who will have it answered.

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I was not willing to close these letters without one more word from the man already quoted at length. So I asked him to tell us in his own way how this question of the Endless Life looks to him. This is his reply, received even as I write you:

“On this, as on other deep issues of religion and life, I have traveled far in my experience and opinions. I heard Bishop Foster's lectures at Chautauqua away back in the seventies, and at the time could hardly forgive him for saying that he did not know that there is a life beyond the grave. It seemed to me he ought to know. As the years have gone, however, I have acquired a growing list of most precious experiences which I cannot define and beliefs which I cannot prove. This is one of them. I would not like to be compelled to prove to anybody

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else that there is an endless life, and I would not like to be compelled to live without the sense of it. There is much mystery and difficulty about the whole subject, but I have found that one can hold a very firm faith in the face of a very large mystery. I can stand the mystery of the life eternal very much better than the emptiness and inadequacy of the life temporal.

"I think I weigh the proofs and arguments fairly and estimate them at what they are worth. To my mind the main ones have never been answered. But as life goes on my belief in the life everlasting seems to rest more and more upon a sense of it than upon an argument for it. I think Horace Bushnell said something like that. You know how the beliefs of the best and wisest men impress me; how particularly the be-

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liefs of Jesus impress me. He clearly believed in this eternal life, right in quantity and quality. His arguments for it are few but tremendous, his evident consciousness of it unshaken even in the trying experiences of his life. In time he lived like an eternal Person, just as in space he lived like an universal one. I take my place with him, 'believing, with him, where I cannot prove.' If any other man doubts, I am sorry, but I cannot give up my faith and my assurance because I cannot impart them to him. I must keep my faith and go into the unseen believing with Jesus, and the future must decide between any doubter and myself.

"It is not chiefly the speculative side of the subject that appeals to me. I used to argue about it, trying to convince myself and others and

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trying to define it in some clear terms. The practical side of the eternal life appeals to me now more than any other. The practice of the life everlasting looks beautiful to me. I am not very skillful at it, but it is worth working at all the time. Jesus did it to perfection. He brought life and immortality to light; he set them walking the streets. He had the words of eternal life. He used that language in daily speech. I like it in him. I like it in others when I hear it. I would like to speak always as a man whose citizenship is in heaven. And I wish that in this way my speech would betray me. I like the way he filled his daily life with good deeds, some of them lowly, like washing the disciples' feet; some of them magnificent, like healing the leper. It all seems to me to belong

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to an eternal man living in time. I used to ask myself how an immortal man would live, and when a man became immortal. Jesus answers both questions. He was immortal all the time and lived like a man who had seen and would see again what we call the better world. There was nothing theatrical or mock-heroic about it. Because he was eternal he lived like that. That makes the eternal life seem so distinctly a practical thing. I want to live like that. It seems to me that a man who is going to live forever ought to live now as he would like to live always. I do not want life to have to change direction at the grave. So I cultivate by practice a taste for those heavenly things. O! I know I do many of the things I always did, but they look different now, with the eternal radiance on them.

LETTERS TO MEN

“So I fill my life with happy memories and beautiful pictures. I do not want to forget this life when I come into the other. It seems to me it will make me very glad to talk over life’s deep and holy experiences with friends who have shared them. I think I shall be richer by so much as I carry a large or small store of such memories with me. And I try to get ready for that other world. I do not mean getting ready to die. The King of that country and this will send for me. I must be ready, with the habits of mind, the character and qualities of life and heart, the manners and graces that one ought to have when he goes to dwell in the King’s palace. I have read that when William Blake, the painter and poet, lay dying, he said ‘he was going to that country he had all his life wished to see,’

A MAN'S RELIGION

and shortly 'he burst into singing of the things he saw.' Really, I quite understand that. I remember a fair young woman who thought that in what we call delirium she heard choir boys singing the Angelus. I think she did.

"So for me the future life is not nearly so much a mystery as an influence, an inspiration, and a power. I share it now imperfectly as I expect once to share it perfectly with my ever-living Master and the friends who 'cannot be where he is not.' It makes this life more beautiful and more brave, more sweet and significant. So I walk with him here, not eager to go out of this life which I find good, but confident against the day when

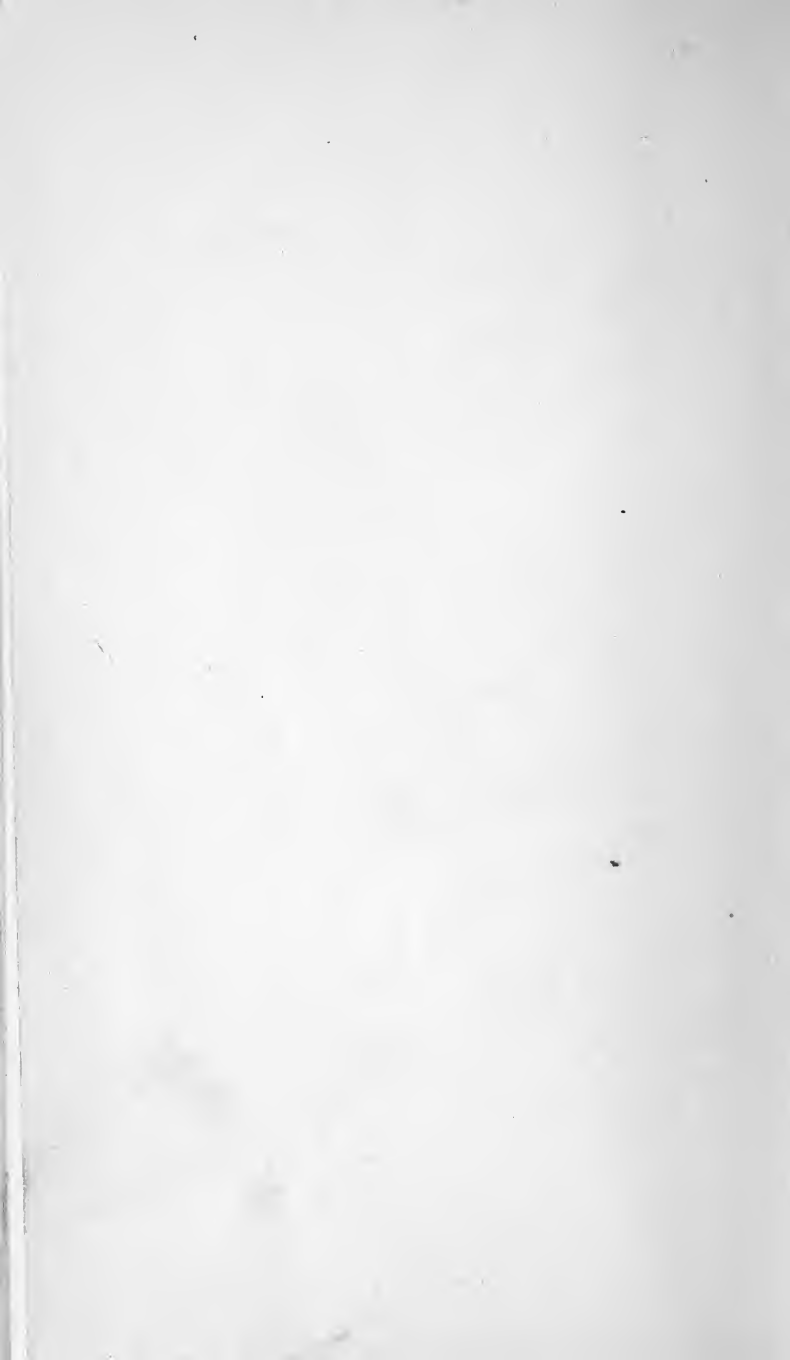
"I shall see Him face to face
And be with Him for evermore."

LETTERS TO MEN

And with these words, dear brethren, and with Latimer's prayer that we all may be "saved with the power of an endless life," I close these letters.

Ever yours,

W. F. M.





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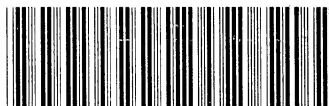
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